

**“NORMAN
EINSTEIN”**

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**The Dis-Integration
of Ken Wilber**

GEOFFREY D. FALK



Million Monkeys Press

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to truth and justice there is no difference between the small and great problems. Whosoever fails to take small matters seriously in a spirit of truth cannot be trusted in greater affairs.

—Albert Einstein

[W]hen intellectual dishonesty (or gross incompetence) is discovered in one part—even a marginal part—of someone’s writings, it is natural to want to examine more critically the rest of his or her work.

—Sokal and Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*

Nobody in the game of football should be called a genius. A genius is somebody like Norman Einstein.

—former NFL quarterback Joe Theisman

THIS BOOK GREW OUT of a chapter and an appendix in the original online version of my second book, *Stripping the Gurus* (STG). Following the electronic publication of that, over the first half of 2006 I posted three additional appendices concerning the flaws in the ideas and character of Ken Wilber, with the material being presented there largely in the order in which it was written.

Here, the same information, with less commentary, has been regrouped by subject—although the “Bald Narcissism” chapter and

the appendix on “Wilber and Bohm” remain largely as they were originally written.

Even with that new, non-chronological presentation, however, the chapters still provide an instructive example as to how even the most well-intentioned of spiritual communities will invariably degenerate into closed, unquestioning, cult-like environments.

Some of the information in several of the sections here was sparked by emails from Jim Andrews, whose research I have freely incorporated. Specifically, that refers to Wilber’s pronouncements on animal cannibalism, the purported benefits and real dangers of meditation, the value of prayer, the “Maharishi Effect,” and the supposed efficiency of yellow versus green value-memes.

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CHAPTER I

NORMAN EINSTEIN

To be thought enlightened, one must appear not only certain that one is, but certain about most everything else, too (Kramer and Alstad, 1993).

KEN WILBER IS THE “LONG-SOUGHT EINSTEIN of consciousness research,” having been generously regarded as such since the late 1970s.

Ken Wilber is “a genius of our times.”

Ken Wilber is “the foremost theoretician in transpersonal [and integral] psychology.”

Ken Wilber is “the world’s most intriguing and foremost philosopher.” To wit:

The twenty-first century literally has three choices: Aristotle, Nietzsche, or Ken Wilber (Jack Crittenden, in [Wilber, 2000]).

Michael Murphy maintains that, along with Aurobindo’s *Life Divine*, Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, and Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*, Wilber’s *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* [SES] is

"one of the four great books of this [twentieth] century"
(Integral, 2004).

Ken Wilber is "an American bodhisattva pandit."

Ken Wilber is "one of the most important pioneers in the field of consciousness in this century."

Ken Wilber is "a source of inspiration and insight to all of us."

Ken Wilber is "the most comprehensive philosophical thinker of our times."

Ken Wilber is "the most cogent and penetrating voice in the recent emergence of a uniquely American wisdom."

Ken Wilber is "the most influential integral thinker in the world today."

One need not search far at all to find glowing endorsements of the work which the esteemed Mr. Ken Wilber (or kw) has done over the past quarter of a century in consciousness studies. Indeed, the latter three of the above recommendations can be found, as of this writing, in the Ken Wilber section of his publisher's website (<http://wilber.shambhala.com>). The first two, further, come from one of *his own* (1991) books, via his late wife's diaries. Two others are only a click away from his home web page, nestled in an adoration-filled "update" on the value of his work, written by one of his long-time students (Reynolds, 2004).

Wilber began writing his first book at age twenty-three, having dropped out of postgraduate biochemistry studies in 1973 to pursue that activity. *The Spectrum of Consciousness* was rejected by at least twenty publishers over a three-year period (Schwartz, 1996) before finally being accepted by the Theosophical (Society's) Publishing House. Since then, Wilber has written over a dozen books. He has also acted (past tense) as an editor for both *ReVision* magazine and the New Science Library imprint of Shambhala, and had his *Collected Works* published by the same press.

Now in his early sixties, Wilber has founded and assumed the presidency of the Integral Institute (www.integralinstitute.org), or I-I, with its affiliated Integral University (IU) and Integral Naked forum. Guests of the latter have included spiritual luminaries such as Deepak Chopra, Carolyn Myss, and the Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan.

Since 1995, Wilber's groundbreaking four-quadrant model of reality has been put to use by psychological, business and political

leaders in America and beyond, under the acronym AQAL (All Quadrants, All Levels). Those four quadrants embrace the objective/exterior (e.g., in brain structure), subjective/interior (e.g., in psychological development and self-awareness), intersubjective (i.e., cultural) and interobjective (i.e., social) lives of the hierarchy of all relative wholes or “holons” in the cosmos. (The term “holon” was itself coined by Arthur Koestler.)

In my opinion, this [four-quadrant] tool is one of the greatest inventions ever proposed for orienting human beings toward their own evolution (Van der Horst, 1997).

And yet—

The model ... is largely descriptive. It organizes a great deal of phenomena, culled from investigations ranging over a wide range of disciplines in the natural and social sciences, and posits or implies that they are connected. But the model has very little to say about *how* they are [causally] connected. Wilber’s silence on this question ... seriously undermines the model’s usefulness for stimulating further research....

In addition to not addressing the processes underlying the transitions from one level to another, Wilber’s model also says little about the connections between phenomena in different quadrants.... How, for example, does a particular kind of consciousness become associated with a particular brain structure? How does a particular kind of social organization grow out of a particular kind of consciousness?

Without answers to questions like these, Wilber’s model can do no more than simply recognize that all these different phenomena exist. Nobody really questions that they do. What people do argue about is how they are related (Smith, 2001a; italics added).

As with Wilber’s academic accolades, one need not search far at all to find indications of his high spiritual attainment. Indeed, already by the mid-’80s, Wilber (1991) could lay claim to “fifteen years of meditation, during which I had had several unmistakable ‘kensho’ [i.e., ‘glimpse of enlightenment’] experiences, fully confirmed by my teachers.”

Of course, nearly every “enlightened” individual in the spiritual marketplace has made fully comparable claims. That is, it is

rare to find a respected spiritual figure who has *not* received confirmation, from his own teachers or gurus, of his minor and major enlightenment experiences. Thus, Wilber is part of a large class, not a small one, in that regard. Such endorsements, indeed, mean absolutely nothing, in terms of evaluating whether any given individual is enlightened or simply wildly deluded.

Nevertheless, Wilber’s kensho experiences later blossomed into the nondual “One Taste” state:

I was conscious for eleven days and nights, even as the body and mind went through waking, dreaming, and sleeping: I was unmoved in the midst of changes; there was no I to be moved; there was only unwavering empty consciousness, the luminous mirror-mind, the witness that was one with everything witnessed. I simply reverted to what I am, and *it has been so, more or less, ever since* (Wilber, 2000a; italics added).

Not even the Dalai Lama can sustain nondual awareness through deep sleep, Wilber informed me, as he can (Horgan, 2003a).

By any reasonable logic, that nondual realization would place Wilber among the “truly great Zen masters” throughout history, both in his own mind and objectively. That is so even should there be states of realization beyond the One Taste experience, i.e., potentially making it not “the highest” possible understanding.

“All good things must come to an end,” however—including, apparently, the eternal, “always-already” One Taste realization:

After attaining this [One Taste] ability in 1995, Wilber sustained it until about a year ago, when a nasty staph infection left him bedridden for six months. “I lost a great deal of access to it,” he said, but “it’s slowly coming back” (Horgan, 2003a).

CHAPTER II

WILBERIAN EVOLUTION

From his footnotes and bibliographies alone, Wilber seems omniscient....

And as with meditation, clean living and exercise, one feels so much better after reading a little Wilber....

A Brief History ... is bound to seduce even the most casual reader into plunging into the intoxicating revelations of all the wise old trees to be found in the great magical Wilberness (Van der Horst, 1997).

NOTWITHSTANDING HIS REPUTATION as a brilliant academic, Wilber has grossly misrepresented basic, high-school-level concepts in evolutionary theory, in Chapter One of his (1996) *A Brief History of Everything*. Those misunderstandings have been analyzed devastatingly by David Lane (1996). The most damaging issues uncovered there relate to Wilber's expressed reluctance to believe that "half a wing" is better than none. In kw's own words:

Take the standard notion that wings simply evolved from forelegs. It takes perhaps a hundred mutations to produce a

functional wing from a leg—a half-wing is no good as a leg and no good as a wing—you can’t run and you can’t fly. It has no adaptive value whatsoever. In other words, with a half-wing you are dinner.

Richard Dawkins (1986), however, has elucidated the long-established facts of biology, regarding such “half-wings” and the like:

There are animals alive today that beautifully illustrate every stage in the continuum. There are frogs that glide with big webs between their toes, tree-snakes with flattened bodies that catch the air, lizards with flaps along their bodies; and several different kinds of mammals that glide with membranes stretched between their limbs, showing us the kind of way bats must have got their start. Contrary to the creationist literature, not only are animals with “half a wing” common [i.e., they are not automatically “dinner”], so are animals with a quarter of a wing, three quarters of a wing, and so on.

Indeed, Darwin himself, in his (1962) *Origin of Species*—first published in 1859—recorded as much:

Look at the family of squirrels; here we have the finest gradation from animals with their tails only slightly flattened, and from others ... with the posterior part of their bodies rather wide and with the skin on their flanks rather full, to the so-called flying squirrels.... We cannot doubt that each structure is of use [i.e., has adaptive value] to each kind of squirrel in its own country.

Nor does that exhaust the examples, even just from Darwin’s own long-extant (1962) catalog:

If about a dozen genera of birds were to become extinct or were unknown, who would have ventured to surmise that birds might have existed which used their wings solely as flappers, like the logger-headed duck (*Micropterus* of Eyton); as fins in the water and as front-legs on the land, like the penguin; as sails, like the ostrich; and functionally for no purpose, like the *Apteryx*? Yet the structure of each of these birds is good for it, under the conditions of life to which it is exposed....

Completely contrary to Wilber's confidently given presentation, then, half a wing certainly is better than none. Even penguins and ostriches know as much.

From being inexcusably wrong about that elementary idea, Wilber goes on to assert that "absolutely nobody" believes the "standard, glib, neo-Darwinian explanation" of chance mutation and natural selection anymore. In reprint editions (e.g., 2000c), that statement has been modified to read that "very few theorists" believe this anymore. Even being thus watered down, however, it still has no point of contact with reality:

[Wilber's claim] is complete rubbish. Almost *everybody* who knows anything about biology does still believe this! (Carroll, 2003).

Dr. Lane—who has taught Darwinian evolution at a university level—then (1996) pertinently assessed Wilber's apparent comprehension of evolutionary biology:

Wilber does not seem to understand that the processes of evolution are blind. He wants to have it "open-eyed" as if natural selection all of sudden wakes up when it hears that a "wing has been formed" (better start chugging) or that an "eye has been completed" (let's fine tune now). Natural selection does not "start" when the eye is formed; it works all along without any conscious intention whatsoever.

Not to sound like a groggy professor, but if Wilber turned in [his written ideas] to me as a college student trying to explain the current view of evolutionary theory, I would give him an "F" and ask to see him in my office.... Wilber has misrepresented the fundamentals of natural selection. Moreover, his presentation of how evolution is viewed today is so skewed that Wilber has more in common with creationists than evolutionists, even though he is claiming to present the evolutionists' current view....

What makes Wilber's remarks on evolution so egregious is ... that he so maligns and misrepresents the current state of evolutionary biology, suggesting that he is somehow on top of what is currently going on in the field.

And Wilber does it by exaggeration, by false statements, and by rhetoric license.

And how have Wilber and his entourage reacted to such eminently valid points? As Jack Crittenden—who used to co-edit the *ReVision* journal with Wilber—put it (in [Integral](#), 2004):

Wilber has not been believably criticized for misunderstanding or misrepresenting any of the fields of knowledge that he includes [in his four-quadrant “Theory of Everything”].

That statement, of course, has been false since at least 1996, given Lane’s wonderful work and the fact that Wilber’s “Theory of Everything” most certainly includes basic evolution.

In May of 2005, Wilber offered a rather hasty defense of his documented misrepresentations and arguable misunderstandings of high-school-level evolution theory. From the Integral Naked web forum, via the [Vomiting Confetti](#) blog:

Folks, give me a break on this one. I have a Master’s degree in biochemistry, and a Ph.D. minus thesis in biochemistry and biophysics, with specialization in the mechanism of the visual process. I did my thesis on the photoisomerization of rhodopsin in bovine rod outer segments. I know evolutionary theory inside out, including the works of Dawkins et al.... Instead of a religious preacher like Dawkins, start with something like Michael Behe’s *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. And then guess what? Neo-Darwinian theory can’t explain shit. Deal with it....

The problem is that creation scientists—who are almost entirely Christians—after having convincingly demonstrated that neo-Darwinian theory has loopholes large enough to drive several Hummers through—then try to prove that Jehovah is in one of the Hummers....

But all that this [“failure” of neo-Darwinian theory] really proves, in my opinion, is that there is an Eros to the Kosmos, an Eros that scientific evolutionary theory as it is simply cannot explain. But overall integral theory doesn’t hang on that particular issue. If physicalistic, materialistic, reductionistic forces turn out to give an adequate explanation to the extraordinary diversity of evolutionary unfolding, then fine, that is what we will include in integral theory. And if not, not. But so far, the “nots” have it by a staggeringly huge margin, and scientists when they are not bragging to the world, whisper this to themselves every single day of their lives.

None of the above, however, alters the fact that Wilber has completely misrepresented the truth that half-wings *do* exist, and have been documented as existing since Darwin's own *Origin of Species*. That has nothing to do with any (excusable) popularizing of Wilber's theories on his own part. Rather, it is simply a gross and brutally dishonest misrepresentation of basic *facts* by him, to suit his own "integral" purposes. That is true independent of whether or not kw understands how evolution works.

Since when, though, is one allowed to misrepresent such elementary facts as the above, even in popularizing one's ideas? What respected academic has ever done that? Simplifying the Ph.D.-level complexities is one thing; misrepresenting high-school-level ideas (with no caveats whatsoever to that effect in the text) is another issue entirely.

Plus, the points on which kw has messed up are literally taught in high school. For whom was he then "dumbing down" those ideas, if even high-school students can understand them in their real nature?

And as to Michael Behe, minimal research discloses:

Intelligent Design has been a wholesale failure, as both science and strategy. None of its scientific claims, especially the work of the main theorists William Dembski and Michael Behe, have stood up under scientific scrutiny. None of their claims is [*sic*] published in scientific journals. Numerous books and articles refute their positions in great detail. Not only have their arguments been shown to be flawed, but in several instances, the factual claims on which they rest have been proven false (Stenger, 2004).

Richard Dawkins (2008) further notes:

Behe simply proclaims the bacterial flagellar motor to be irreducibly complex. Since he offers no argument in favor of his assertion, we may begin by suspecting a failure of his imagination. He further alleges that specialist biological literature has ignored the problem. The falsehood of this allegation was massively and (to Behe) embarrassingly documented in the court of Judge John E. Jones in Pennsylvania in 2005, where Behe was testifying as an expert witness on behalf of a group of creationists who had tried to impose "intelligent design" creationism on the science curriculum of a

local public school—a move of “breathtaking inanity,” to quote Judge Jones....

If you take Behe seriously, please further read Pigliucci’s (2001) critique of Intelligent Design theory and Neocreationism. From which:

To be sure, there are several cases in which biologists do not know enough about the fundamental constituents of the cell to be able to hypothesize or demonstrate their gradual evolution. But this is rather an argument from ignorance, not positive evidence of irreducible complexity. William Paley advanced exactly the same argument to claim that it is impossible to explain the appearance of the eye by natural means. Yet, today biologists know of several examples of intermediate forms of the eye, and there is evidence that this structure evolved several times independently during the history of life on Earth.

Nice example; and ironic, too, given Wilber’s own research with cows’ eyes, and his consistent use of the same type of sophomoric “arguments from ignorance” to find room for his own transpersonal notions and willing acceptance of parapsychological claims, within real science.

Further,

Although the [Intelligent Design] movement is loosely allied with, and heavily funded by, various conservative Christian groups—and although ID plainly maintains that life was created—it is generally silent about the identity of the creator (Orr, 2005).

Not exactly *Jehovah* in a Hummer, then, is it?

And Wilber’s claim that integral theorizers will abide by physical science if it can “explain everything” is extremely disingenuous: He will do no such thing, ever. For, his “theories” have been shot through with *koshas* (i.e., astral and causal bodies), auras, subtle energies, chakras and the like from the start. That is, he has made his living, from the beginning, theorizing on the basis of completely unvetted and unsound data, and continues to do so to the present day.

So what we have here from Wilber are no documented facts, no relevant details, just his “Einsteinian” authority, his rampant

hyperbole, and a laughable appeal to other discredited “thinkers” to back up his own claims to expertise.

If kw wants to make wild claims about the “failures” of Darwinian evolution in courtroom contexts and otherwise, he needs to do *way* more than simply throw out a smoke-screen of unsubstantiated claims (plus one book title).

And why did it take him nearly a *decade* to give any response at all to what is effectively just more of David Lane’s critique of his misunderstandings of basic evolution, from 1996? Did he think that *devastating* critique was just going to go away?

In his most-recent (2006e) text, *Integral Spirituality*—“possibly the most important spiritual book in postmodern times,” according to the blurbing roshi Dennis Genpo Merzel—Wilber again made the following claim:

Proponents of ID have one truth on their side: scientific materialism cannot explain all of evolution (it can explain pretty much everything except major holistic transformational leaps). With that, I quite agree.

Since kw gave no examples there of such “major holistic transformational leaps,” however, one could reasonably have assumed that he was referring to the evolutionary development of wings and eyes, etc.—neither of which provide any challenge at all to neo-Darwinian evolution.

None of this, again, has anything to do with simple popularizations of integral theories, were those to be done with proper forthrightness. It is rather just an appeal to basic intellectual honesty and minimal academic competence. Other fields of knowledge have that. That is what makes them worth spending time understanding.

So what does real science, then, have to say about Behe and his ilk?

[I]n 2002, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) passed a resolution declaring “intelligent design” to be a “philosophical or theological concept,” not a statement obtained through the examination of hard evidence, and that it should not be taught in science classes. That’s 120,000 men and women of science, honored and respected internationally, who have the experience, the knowl-

edge, and the training to be able to understand and authoritatively declare on such matters (Randi, 2005).

Which “real scientists” then, are the ones whom Wilber thinks are siding with him? Perhaps the following, from the www.skepticalinvestigations.org website:

In a new paper Ted Dace contends that the dispute between the rival views of evolution is between two failed theories. The mechanistic ideology of neo-Darwinism weakens the case for evolution and leaves the field clear for creationism. Sheldrake and Elsasser have found a basis for the inheritance of adaptations making this endless clash of ideologies redundant.

As an exercise for anyone with even a high-school knowledge of how evolution works: Poke SUV-sized holes in the following, embarrassingly off-the-mark objections to neo-Darwinian evolution, from the same paper:

The Hyacinth macaw can crack a nut with its beak that you or I would need a sledgehammer to open. Is all that colossal strength nothing more than a side-effect of a chance mutation in the macaw’s genetic toolkit? How many millions of such coding mistakes had to come and go before the right one announced itself, and at last the bird got its meal?

So stupendously unlikely is the *perfect mutation at the perfect time* that calculating the odds against it taking place even once exceeds our imaginative capacity. It is, in fact, a miracle (Dace, 2005; italics added).

Note again that Wilber has claimed that he was deliberately oversimplifying his comparable presentation of the mechanism of evolution—and thus apparently *intentionally deceiving* his readers—in a book intended for the general public. Yet, his cohorts in “integral skepticism” quite clearly believe exactly what he claims to have purposely wrongly presented. (Larry Dossey and Gary Schwartz are both “Associates and Advisors” of the Skeptical Investigations site. They are also founding members of Wilber’s Integral Institute.)

Whether or not any of the other avant-garde claims made in Dace’s paper are valid, when perfect nonsense (or deliberate deceptions, take your pick) like the above regarding “perfect mutations”

and probabilities is presented as if it were insightful wisdom, one is being generous in even reading further.

More recently, Wilber (2007) has touted the immune system as something which supposedly cannot be accounted for on the basis of neo-Darwinian evolution:

[T]he complex forms of evolution that we see—such as the immune system—are not the products of mere chance mutation and natural selection....

Interestingly, Richard Dawkins makes the following related point, in his (2008) *The God Delusion*:

Another of Behe's favorite alleged examples of "irreducible complexity" is the immune system. Let Judge Jones himself take up the story:

In fact, on cross-examination, Professor Behe was questioned concerning his 1996 claim that science would never find an evolutionary explanation for the immune system. He was presented with fifty-eight peer-reviewed publications, nine books, and several immunology textbook chapters about the evolution of the immune system; however, he simply insisted that this was still not sufficient evidence of evolution, and that it was not "good enough."

Behe, under cross-examination by Eric Rothschild, chief counsel for the plaintiffs, was forced to admit that he hadn't read most of those fifty-eight peer-reviewed papers.... After listening to Behe, Rothschild eloquently summed up what every honest person in that courtroom must have felt:

Thankfully, there are scientists who do search for answers to the question of the origin of the immune system.... It's our defense against debilitating and fatal diseases. The scientists who wrote those books and articles toil in obscurity, without book royalties or speaking engagements. Their efforts help us combat and cure serious medical conditions. By contrast, Professor Behe and the entire intelligent design movement [like Wilber with his Eros-fixation] are doing nothing to advance scientific or

medical knowledge and are telling future generations of scientists, don't bother.

In connection with Wilber's recent emphasis on the immune system as ostensibly showing the action of Eros, he has also been unconvincingly insisting that his original claims about half-wings offering no evolutionary advantage were never meant to be taken seriously, i.e., that they were intended just as metaphors. It is not difficult to guess as to why he has changed his emphasis, and attempted to rewrite his own history.

First, note that Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* was first published (and largely refuted) in 1996, being reviewed in *Nature* in September of that year. Thus, kw could not, in principle have read it and referenced its ideas while writing *A Brief History of Everything*, which was published before the end of the same year. (In the publishing industry, there is typically at least a nine-month delay between the finishing of a manuscript and its official publication date.)

Wilber's ABHOE mentions the immune system only once ... and that one mention is given, ironically, in a strictly metaphorical context.

Thus, a very reasonable inference would be that kw has been so comfortable in recently back-pedaling about his "half-wing" claims only because he now has a "better" example, from Behe, which he *hadn't even known about back in 1996*, when he was writing ABHOE. So, he can dismiss his own earlier, false claims about the supposed uselessness of half-wings as being *intended* only as metaphors, and can further belittle anyone who took them seriously as having supposedly missed his point:

I am fully aware that selection carries forth each previous selection (which still has problems in itself ... why would a half wing make running easier???), but even if you give that to the evolutionists (which I am willing to do), it still has this gaping hole in it.... [W]ings or eyes ... are metaphors and examples for this extraordinary capacity of creative emergence that is intrinsic to the universe (exactly as Whitehead explained it). So, no, I don't take this criticism of my work seriously, although it is a good example of flatland thinking (Wilber, 2007).

Interestingly, Kenneth Dial has recently showed (see [Haugland, 2004](#)) that having half a wing actually *does* make running easier for partridge chicks, but that is just lucky happenstance in this context. What is more relevant is that there is no reason why both of those skills (i.e., flying and running) should be simultaneously maximized in any species, much less that any single attribute/mutation should increase the ability to do both of them. Obviously, all that is needed for a mutation to be retained by the species is for the *net* effect of it to yield a slight survival advantage.

Organisms don't evolve toward every imaginable advantage. If they did, every creature would be faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. An organism that devotes some of its matter and energy to one organ must take it away from another. It must have thinner bones or less muscle or fewer eggs. Organs evolve only when their benefits outweigh their costs ([Pinker, 1999](#)).

In his ([2005a](#)) interview with Alan Wallace on Integral Naked, Wilber further asserted:

The closure principle doesn't explain why dirt gets up and starts writing poetry. It's incomprehensible to me that somebody can actually look at you with a straight face and say something like that. Nonetheless, there are a lot of them out there at Jane Loevinger's stage five and they all seem to believe it.

Wilber's emphasis on poetry there is likely just a convenient "leader" into the transpersonal realms; what he is really trying to sneak in is that "dirt can't get up and consciously experience the astral or causal realms, or rest in the Witness" without Eros to animate it. That is, even if dirt could get up and write poetry, by whatever algorithmically expressible laws, it could never evolve into astral, causal and transcendent stages or levels of consciousness. So, Wilber's frequent mention of poetry is just the "thin edge of the wedge" which he wants to use to sneak Eros into the Kosmos: if he can get you to (wrongly) grant him that poetry is an "emergent" phenomenon, he will be very quick to parlay that all the way up the Great Chain of Being.

And yet, contrary to the idea that there is some esoteric force involved in the creation of art, the prolific inventor and futurist Ray Kurzweil has built a “Cybernetic Poet” program, which “analyzes word sequences from patterns of poems it has ‘read’ using markov models (a mathematical cousin of neural nets [and also widely used in automatic speech-recognition programs]).” It then creates new poetry based on those patterns ... just as other programs have created music in particular styles:

In 1997, Steve Larson, a University of Oregon music professor, arranged a musical variation of the Turing Test by having an audience attempt to determine which of three pieces of music had been written by a computer and which one of the three had been written two centuries ago by a human named Johann Sebastian Bach.... [T]he audience selected the piece written by a computer program named EMI (Experiments in Musical Intelligence) to be the authentic Bach composition (Kurzweil, 2000).

Wilber has, by now (2007), reduced his notion of Eros to potentially being “[not] a metaphysical force, just an intrinsic force of self-organization”—yet still apparently *in addition to* the self-organization reasonably modeled by legitimate scientists like Stuart Kauffman. That is again being done on the pretense that more self-organization is needed in the Kosmos, to explain poetry and intelligence, etc., than materialistic science can provide.

Yet, as Steven Pinker (in Schneider, 2007; italics added) has noted:

Intelligence is a gadget that is selected when its benefits (in particular, outsmarting the defenses of other plants and animals) outweigh the costs (a big, injury-prone, birth-complicating, metabolically expensive organ bobbling on top of your neck). And that probably happens only for certain kinds of organisms in certain ecologically circumstances. *It isn't a general goal of evolution, or else we'd see humanlike intelligence repeatedly evolving.* Since elephants and humans have not been primary ecological competitors for most of the evolutionary history of the elephant, it's unlikely that they've been waiting for humans to get out of the way before getting smarter. It's more likely that they are at an adaptive plateau in which still-better brains aren't worth the cost.

If Eros was really behind it all, pushing intelligence to emerge in all species, why wouldn't elephants have evolved the same (or greater) cognitive capacities as humans have? Why would It have pushed our particular species harder, to develop a more complex (but smaller) brain? If the Goal of the Kosmos was to express Divine Intelligence, why wouldn't elephants have evolved to be literal Ganeshes? *What was stopping them*, particularly since "Every organism alive today has had the same amount of time to evolve since the origin of life"?

In many lineages, of course, animals have become more complex. Life began simple, so the complexity of the *most* complex creature alive on earth at any time has to increase over the eons. But in many lineages they have not. The organisms reach an optimum and stay put, often for hundreds of millions of years. And those that do become more complex don't always become smarter.... Evolution is about ends, not means; becoming smart [via the interconnections and algorithms of a complex network of neurons, called a brain] is just one option (Pinker, 1999).

Wilber (in Phipps, 2007) has also tried to relate evolution to the idea that higher stages of development necessarily "transcend and include" their precursors:

Evolution goes beyond what went before, but because it must embrace what went before, then its very nature is to transcend and include [and thus to become more complex], and thus it has an inherent directionality, a secret impulse [of progress] toward increasing depth, increasing intrinsic value, increasing consciousness.

But, as Jeff Meyerhoff has noted, in his (2006d) "Dismissal Vs. Debate":

For Wilber, progress ... is determined by increased complexity defined as greater transcendence and inclusion.

Many biological organisms find their adaptive success [i.e., their "survivability"] in becoming simpler after a more complex beginning [and thus not "including" all that went before them in their own evolution]....

So Wilber cannot use survivability as his criterion of progress because then he will have no justification for struc-

turing his entire integral hierarchy around increased complexity. His whole model of universal movement from the Big Bang to the present moment as one of directed evolution towards increased complexity is seriously skewed towards a relatively minor natural phenomenon....

In late June of 2006, Jim Chamberlain posted his own comments on Wilber's misrepresentations of biological evolution, on Frank Visser's Integral World (www.integralworld.net) website:

Wilber adds the word "clearly" to the last sentence [of a quote from Ernst Mayr's book *What Evolution Is*, regarding the "progressive" nature of evolution] and he says it with great emphasis, but it does not appear in the book.

Wilber responded with a (2006d; italics added) blog entry, after Chamberlain's above claim had been shown to be incorrect:

[S]cholars in particular should accept no statements on the Visser site about what my position is....

I am saying that categorically the posts at that site are not to be trusted or accepted in any academic discourse as representing my actual views. *They lie over there*, so be careful. I'm sorry, but the site is so sleazy, one critic [actually, one of kw's integral friends] called it the equivalent of the Penthouse Letters to the editor....

I'm warning scholars to stay away from this when it comes to academic discussions of my work.

From Chamberlain's subsequent apology for his error:

Mayr said "clearly" and Wilber quoted him accurately and I made a stupid mistake by stating otherwise. For that I apologize to Ken.

Not to at all excuse Chamberlain's rather mind-boggling error, but: even the formal "editorial integrity" with which Wilber's own work has been evaluated by his publisher/friend Samuel Bercholz at Shambhala, for one, didn't stop his presentation of evolutionary biology in *A Brief History of Everything* from being, in Robert Carroll's (2003) words, "a few paragraphs of half-truths and lies." Nor did it stop kw from ridiculously misrepresenting David Bohm's ideas on quantum physics, in his embarrassingly amateurish *The*

Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes. Nor did it constrain his wildly hyperbolic, unprovoked ranting against Bohm in *The Eye of Spirit*, as disclosed in this book's appendix.

If what Chamberlain has done is to "lie" rather than just make a "stupid mistake," then Wilber is subject to exactly the same charge, many times over, for his numerous provable fabrications of purported "facts." That is, as we shall see repeatedly, he himself could hardly be more guilty than he already is of the very same misrepresentations that he finds in Chamberlain's piece.

Chamberlain, though, at least had the decency to apologize for his inexcusable "stupid mistake." Where is the same integrity in kw when *he* gets caught provably fabricating information in an attempt to either support his own "theories" or discredit the work of his "competitors"?

Interestingly, in addition to his gross misrepresentations of high-school-level evolutionary theory, Wilber has equally falsely presented the facts of animal warfare and cannibalism.

First, in his (1983a) *Up from Eden*, kw had this to say regarding the supposed psychological and spiritual causes underlying war and the "substitute sacrifice" of human murder:

[U]nder the desire to kill lies the extroverted death impact, and under death impact lies the pull of transcendence. Murder, that is, is a form of substitute sacrifice or substitute transcendence. Homicide is the new form of the Atman project. The deepest wish of all is to sacrifice one's self—"kill" it—so as to find true transcendence and Atman; but, failing that, one arranges the *substitute* sacrifice of actually killing somebody else, thus acting on, and appeasing, the terrifying confrontation with death and Thanatos....

I am not denying the existence of simple, instinctive, biological aggression, in mammals or in humans. The coyote does aggress—but not out of hatred. As Ashley Montagu put it, the coyote doesn't kill the rabbit because it hates the rabbit but because it loves the rabbit the way I love ice cream. **Man—and only man**—regularly kills out of *hatred*, and for that we will have to look elsewhere than the genes....

I am suggesting that, in the cognitive elaboration between simple biological aggression and wanton human murder, death and death terror become all-significantly interwoven into the final motivation....

Aggression and mass homicide, in the form of war, generally began ... with the [agrarian] mythic-membership structure.

And yet, from the December, 1995, *National Geographic* article by Peter Miller on “Jane Goodall,” concerning Goodall’s decades-long field studies of chimps in Tanzania:

Frequently tender and compassionate, humanity’s closest living relatives are also capable of scheming, deceiving, **and waging war....**

By the end of the conflict, the Kahama community—seven males and three adult females and their young—had been annihilated. Researchers witnessed five of the attacks, in which the Kasakela chimps tore at their victims’ flesh with their teeth as if they were common prey.

Goodall’s best guess as to the origins of that extermination? That the territorial Kasakela males were taking back land which they had previously occupied. That was purely a guess on her part, though, to try and make sense of the chimps’ actions.

The warring of those chimps was actually disclosed by Goodall as early as a May, 1979, *National Geographic* article—several years before Wilber’s copyrighting of *Up from Eden*.

So, quite obviously, Wilber has again inexcusably gotten his *basic* facts wrong, there. That is even aside from his more-recent (1996) admission that 58% of foraging (i.e., pre-agrarian, pre-mythic-membership) cultures engaged in “frequent or intermittent warfare.” Yet amazingly, as recently as 1996, in the same *A Brief History of Everything*, he was still insisting that apes do not make war. (Chimps are apes of equatorial Africa.)

If one sticks to the properly vetted data, it is clear that chimps (and dolphins too, apparently) are just as capable of extended warring as are human beings, for what look to be quite comparable reasons and emotions.

One assumes, though, that any “cognizance of their own mortality,” and consequent transpersonally hypothesized “substitute sacrifice” on the part of the chimps and dolphins, wouldn’t really enter into it!

From kw’s (2003c) *Kosmic Consciousness*, CD 5 Track 3, beginning at 4:39, we further learn:

[T]estosterone is one component of a dickhead, kick-ass attitude that we all know and love as the human male. And it's also human males, rats, and weasels are the only three animals that kill their own kind. So I think that sort of says something as well.

However, we already knew, from our respective days in high-school biology, that the female praying mantis cannibalizes the male after sex. Indeed, even as early as 1978, *Time* magazine published an article, “Animals That Kill Their Young.” The piece begins:

In his classic work *On Aggression*, Nobel Laureate Konrad Lorenz argued that man is the only species that regularly kills its own kind. This concept, which contrasted the order and restraint in the animal world with the chaotic aggressiveness of man, reflected the mood of the time: the shadow-of-the-Bomb pessimism of the '50s and early '60s. But Lorenz was wrong; since 1963, when his book was published, naturalists have identified dozens of species that kill their own, including lions, hippos, bears, wolves, hyenas, herring gulls and more than fifteen types of primates other than man.

Lorenz's *On Aggression* is item #267 in the bibliography for Wilber's (1983a) *Up from Eden*—being a woefully outdated source of information even at that point. Note, though, that even when kw has updated his “expert” knowledge (as of 2003), he is still more than *twenty-five years* behind anything resembling a competent, current understanding of the field.

CHAPTER III

SPIRALING PSYCHOLOGY

WILBER WAS FOR MANY YEARS FETED as the “foremost theoretician in transpersonal psychology,” until his voluntary abandoning of that field to found his own, more-inclusive “integral psychology.” Thus, one might reasonably hope that, whatever shortcomings exist in his knowledge of other fields, his understanding and presentation of core ideas in psychology would stand up to thorough questioning.

However, as early as 1993, kw’s understanding of Carl Jung’s ideas regarding archetypes was seriously questioned by the Jungian psychologist V. Walter Odajnyk, in Appendix A of his *Gathering the Light*. Indeed, Odajnyk there explicitly regarded Wilber as having an “erroneous view” of Jung’s position:

Wilber’s criticism of Jung’s notion of archetypes is misinformed. Contrary to what Wilber states, Jung *does* refer to the archetypes as “the patterns upon which all other manifestations are based”....

[Further,] contrary to what Wilber claims, Jung does not locate the archetypes only at the beginning of the evolution-

ary spectrum—they are present both at the beginning and at the end....

The spirit Mercurius is the archetype that expresses the notion, stated much too generally by Wilber, that “the ascent of consciousness was drawn *toward* the archetypes *by* the archetypes themselves.” Far from being a criticism of Jung, this was Jung’s discovery and not Wilber’s....

[Likewise,] it is Jung and not Wilber who first proposed clear distinctions among “collective prepersonal, collective personal, and collective transpersonal” elements of the psyche [cf. Wilber’s celebrated “pre/trans fallacy” insights where, because both pre-rational and transrational claims are “non-rational,” they are often wrongly equated].

Note further that Odajnyk’s critique was given well prior to Crittenden’s assertion—first made in 1998, and reprinted by Wilber’s own Integral Institute in 2004—that no “believable criticisms” have ever been made of kw’s representations of others’ work. Further, Odajnyk’s book was put into print by Wilber’s own long-time publisher, Shambhala. Thus, kw could not reasonably have been unaware of its existence.

Odajnyk’s comments on Wilber’s early work, too, are worth noting:

When it comes to psychological development, we know that it is possible to point out a person, or a culture, with highly evolved intelligence and consciousness while his, or its, instinctive, emotional, and ethical development lags far behind In other words, it is possible to have a higher consciousness that is “transcendent, transpersonal, and transtemporal” and a personal unconscious that is “instinctive, impulsive, libidinous, id-ish, animal, ape-like.” I know that for Wilber [in his early work, pre-1981] this is not possible by definition, but definition is theory.

Wilber’s more recent (see 2000e) psychological model includes more than a dozen “streams” of development, or quasi-independent “lines”—of cognition, needs, sexuality, motivation, self-identity, etc. Those lines were first introduced by kw (1998) in his “Wilber-3” phase, beginning in the early ’80s. And such epicyclic streams/lines do indeed now allow for individuals to be simultaneously at, for example, a high level of cognitive or of psychic/spiritual development, but a low moral stage.

In his discussions of psychological stage-growth, Wilber has referenced Jean Piaget’s work since his (kw’s) early-’80s books *The Atman Project* and *Up from Eden*. **Chapter 11** of his *A Brief History of Everything* further has this to say regarding Piaget’s concrete operational and formal operational stages:

Around the age of 11–15 years in our culture, the capacity for formal operational awareness emerges.... Where concrete operational awareness [“conop,” from around age seven] can operate on the concrete world, formal operational awareness can operate on thought itself. It’s not just thinking about the world, it’s thinking about thinking....

There’s also a classical [*sic*] experiment that Piaget used to spot this extremely important emergence or paradigm shift or worldview shift. In simplified versions: the person is given three glasses of clear liquid and told that they can be mixed in a way that will produce a yellow color. The person is then asked to produce the yellow color.

Concrete operational children will simply start mixing the liquids together haphazardly. They will keep doing this until they stumble on the right combination or give up. In other words, as the name implies, they perform *concrete operations*—they have to actually do it in a concrete way.

Formal operational adolescents will first form a general picture of the fact that you have to try glass A with glass B, then A with C, then B with C, and so on. If you ask them about it, they will say something like, “Well, I need to try all the various combinations one at a time.” In other words, they have a formal operation in their mind, a scheme that lets them know that you have to try *all the possible* combinations.

Piaget (2000), in his own books, actually described using *five* jars of clear liquid—labeled “A” through “E”—not three. Note, though, that kw did explicitly state that he was presenting a “simplified” version of the experiment—exactly what he failed to state with regard to his misrepresentations of basic evolution *in the same book*. If one takes that as being significant, it only makes it more likely that, in spite of his subsequent claims to the contrary, his misrepresentations of Darwinian evolution came precisely from failing to understand it even at a high-school level. That is, the pattern would make him more honest, but less competent.

In any case, M.I.T.'s Seymour Papert (1993), inventor of the LOGO (Turtle) programming language and math-learning environment, had this to say about the individual's evolution from the conop to the formop stage:

What is the nature of the difference between the so-called "concrete" operations involved in **conservation** [e.g., where the results of counting do not depend on the order in which the relevant objects are counted, or where the volume of a liquid remains the same whether it is in a tall or a short glass] and the so-called "formal" operations involved in the combinatorial task? The names given them by Piaget and the empirical data suggest a deep and essential difference.

[But from] a computational point of view, the most salient ingredients of the combinatorial task are related to the idea of procedure—systematicity and debugging. A successful solution consists of following some such procedure as:

- Separate the beads into colors
- Choose a color A as color 1
- Form all the pairs that can be formed with color 1
- Choose color 2
- Form all the pairs that can be formed with color 2
- Do this for each color
- Go back and remove the duplicates

So what is really involved is writing and executing a program including the all-important debugging step. This observation suggests a reason for the fact that children acquire this ability so late: Contemporary culture provides relatively little opportunity for *bricolage* [i.e., do-it-yourself "experimentation"] with the elements of systematic procedures of this type....

[Endnote: Of course our culture provides everyone with plenty of occasions to *practice* particular systematic procedures. Its poverty is in materials for *thinking about* and *talking about* procedures....]

I see no reason to doubt that this difference could account for a gap of five years or more between the ages at which conservation of number and combinatorial abilities are acquired....

It may well be universally true of precomputer societies that *numerical* knowledge would be more richly represented than *programming* knowledge. It is not hard to invent plausible explanations of such a cognitive-social universal. But things may be different in the computer-rich cultures of the future. If computers and programming become a part of the daily life of children, the conservation-combinatorial gap will surely close and **could conceivably be reversed: Children may learn to be systematic** [a purportedly distinguishing characteristic of formop, and one standard experimental “proof” that a child is at that stage of development] **before they learn to be quantitative** [in conop]!

Papert (1993) worked with Piaget himself for five years in Switzerland, from 1959 to 1964; he knows what he is talking about on this subject.

Even worse for Wilber’s reputation, his oft-given claim of a consensus in the developmental-psychology field with regard to Piaget’s studies is demonstrably false:

Piaget’s theory of cognitive development is central to Wilber’s description of the individual’s interior development. Yet in my chapter on individual development [in *Bald Ambition*] I cite five professors of psychology [who seriously question the sturdiness of Piaget’s ideas, even to the point of narrating a “collapse of Piagetian theory”], all with concentrations in developmental psychology....

Wilber, writing a few years after these negative assessments, writes that “as for the cognitive line itself, Piaget’s work is still very impressive; moreover, after almost three decades of intense cross-cultural research, the evidence is virtually unanimous: Piaget’s stages up to formal operational are universal and cross-cultural” (Meyerhoff, 2006b).

In Wilber’s *A Brief History of Everything*, he further had this to say regarding the cognitive spectrum:

Take, for example, the work of Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences—the idea that development involves not one capacity but many relatively independent capacities (from musical to artistic to mathematical to athletic, and so on), **which I think is quite right**. We can plot the depth of those developmental capacities as well. They will fall within

the same basic levels of consciousness development, but they are nonetheless relatively separate talents that unfold with their own logics, as it were. None of that is denied; in fact, I very much support those approaches. In my view, there are numerous different developmental lines or streams (e.g., cognitive, moral, aesthetic, interpersonal, needs, etc.) that move relatively independently through the basic levels or waves (body to mind to soul to spirit), giving us a very rich, multidimensional tapestry of waves and streams of consciousness unfolding.

However, Linda Gottfredson (1998) has noted, of the same alleged “multiple intelligences”:

Several decades of factor-analytic research on mental tests have confirmed a hierarchical model of mental abilities. The evidence ... puts *g* [i.e., “general intelligence”] at the apex in this model, with more specific aptitudes arrayed at successively lower levels: the so-called group factors, such as verbal ability, mathematical reasoning, spatial visualization and memory, are just below *g*, and below these are skills that are more dependent on knowledge or experience, such as the principles and practices of a particular job or profession.

Some researchers use the term “multiple intelligences” to label these sets of narrow capabilities and achievements. Psychologist Howard Gardner of Harvard University, for example, has postulated that eight relatively autonomous “intelligences” are exhibited in different domains of achievement. He does not dispute the existence of *g* but treats it as a specific factor relevant chiefly to academic achievement and to situations that resemble those of school. Gardner does not believe that tests can fruitfully measure his proposed intelligences; without tests, no one can at present determine whether the intelligences are indeed independent of *g* (or each other). Furthermore, it is not clear to what extent Gardner’s intelligences tap personality traits or motor skills rather than mental aptitudes.

Other forms of intelligence have been proposed; among them, emotional intelligence and practical intelligence are perhaps the best known. They are probably amalgams either of intellect and personality or of intellect and informal experience in specific job or life settings, respectively. Practical intelligence like “street smarts,” for example, seems to con-

sist of the localized knowledge and know-how developed with untutored experience in particular everyday settings and activities—the so-called school of hard knocks. In contrast, general intelligence is not a form of achievement, whether local or renowned. Instead the *g* factor regulates the rate of learning: it greatly affects the rate of return in knowledge to instruction and experience but cannot substitute for either.

Steven Pinker (in [Schneider, 2007](#)) likewise concluded:

I'm sympathetic to modular theories of the generic human mind like Howard Gardner's, but they have nothing to do with individual differences in intelligence. For one thing, the inclusion of “musical” and “bodily and kinesthetic” intelligence is mainly a tactic to morally elevate those traits by re-branding them as forms of “intelligence.” But a great athlete or drummer is not necessarily “intelligent” in the sense that people ordinarily mean by the term.

In more recent years, beginning with his (2001) novel *Boomeritis*, Wilber has focused on Spiral Dynamics® (SD), based on the work of Clare Graves, as a convenient way of categorizing stages of human psychological development. (It is not necessary, for the present purposes, to understand exactly what Spiral Dynamics is, in all of its details. The interested reader may wish to consult Don Beck and Christopher Cowan's [2005] *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change*.)

Interestingly, while Beck was a founding member of the Integral Institute, his former partner Cowan (www.spiraldynamics.org) has actually commented very unfavorably on Wilber's comprehension of SD:

[Wilber's presentations of Spiral Dynamics] twist the theory and contain glib over-simplifications and biases ... which reflect neither the nuances nor the intent of this theory. There is frequent confusion of values with Value Systems. He also seems to have trouble differentiating the levels of psychological existence from personality traits ... and grossly misunderstands and overplays the “tier” notion....

Much of the material demonstrates a very limited grasp of the underlying theory ... he's wrong far more often than there's any excuse for. Thus, the supposed SD foundation on

which he builds so many arguments is fundamentally, fatally flawed....

[Wilber] is putting out impressive-sounding junk and nonsense that must be undone if the integrity of the model is to be protected. There's no excuse for it (Cowan, 2005).

Because Wilber tries to apply but doesn't actually understand Gravesian theory, he confuses the levels/colors like a novice. He doesn't know green from orange or yellow. Thus, the elaborate arguments he lays out are constructed on quicksand.... And because he sounds authoritative, newcomers to SD will believe they're getting a valid overview of Graves/SD from *Boomeritis* (Cowan, 2002).

In one of his attempted practical applications of Spiral Dynamics, on page 396 of *Boomeritis*, Wilber has "Charles Morin" assert the following:

Studies [not cited by kw] show that yellow [value-meme, level seven] is approximately *ten times more efficient than green* [level six]....

[I]f 10% of the population is at yellow, it will very likely be at least as effective as 25% at green....

10% of elderly, wealthy, yellow Boomers will have at least the impact that the 25% of young green Boomers did....

(Green is the highest value-meme in the "first tier" of development, stereotypically manifesting as an anti-hierarchical, politically correct, pluralistically valued self. Yellow is the lowest of the "second-tier" stages; in it, "[d]ifferences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows" [Wilber, 2000f].)

If 10% of the population one day reaches yellow, however, and if yellow is approximately *ten times* more efficient than green, then the 10% of the population at yellow would be approximately *four times* as effective, not merely *at least* as effective, as the 25% of the population at green ($10 * 10\%/25\% = 4$).

Further, if kw's presumption that $Y = 10G$ were correct, then the *current* 2% at Y would already be almost as effective as the 25% at G. That is, if 2% of the North American population is currently at yellow, and 20% to 25% (kw's own numbers) is currently at green, and if yellow is "ten times more efficient" than green, then Y and G should be nearly of *equal strength* (20 vs. 20-to-25,

from ballpark figures to begin with) right now, in terms of their influence on our culture.

Thus, minimal comparison of Wilber’s claims against reality, there, shows that things don’t work at all, in practice, the way he imagines they should. For, by his own testimony, it is the “greens” who hold far more sway over politically correct academia than the yellow-and-above, second-tier (or higher) leaders such as himself. That position goes back at least to the early nineties, as kw indicates in the Preface to the second edition of his (2000) *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*. There, he relates that his attempted writing of a “textbook of psychology” was cramped by the fact that the words “development, hierarchy, transcendental [and] universal” were “no longer allowed in academic discourse,” owing to the “extreme post-modernism,” “pluralistic relativism,” and (green-meme) anti-hierarchy attitudes which had supposedly spread through the academic world. As he put it in a related interview:

[T]he green-meme dominates virtually all of conventional academia AND countercultural academia (Shambhala, 2001).

From untenable mathematics, to “responses from critics” who are actually supporters: In *Boomeritis*, on page 244, kw has the Powell character state:

The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America’s Campuses, by Kors and Silverglate, is a thorough survey of the actual state of affairs. Far from being right-wing ideologues, its authors are liberals in good standing. Instead of quoting case after case—I urge all of you to consult this book for yourselves—I will give a few of the responses from critics, simply to try to convey a sense of the urgency and outrage.

“Powell” goes on to rattle off a group of very flattering quotes from Linda Chavez, Alan Dershowitz, Christina Sommers, Nat Hentoff, and Wendy Kaminer, in support of Kors and Silverglate’s book.

It turns out, though, that those supposed “responses from critics” are actually blurbs taken *verbatim* from the hardcover edition of *The Shadow University*.

As every author knows, such blurbs are generated by individuals whom one already knows to be, or at least hopes to be,

sympathetic to one's ideas; they do not come from "critics." (Dershowitz, Hentoff and Kaminer were all actually thanked for their "assistance" by the authors in the **front matter** of the book.)

Granted, *Boomeritis* is purportedly a work of fiction—just as the rest of Wilber's writings are ostensibly based in fact. So, technically, he is allowed (in the former) to make up whatever "facts" he likes, and present them as if they were real. Unfortunately, there no way for the reader to tell which of the claims in that novel are meant to be taken seriously. Worse, as we have seen and will see much more of, Wilber's "real" research suffers from exactly the same penchant for "making things up out of thin air" as does his "fiction."

CHAPTER IV

INTEGRAL MEDITATION

IN 1999, WILBER PUBLISHED *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, on the integration of science and meditation-based religion. That relatively error-free book actually received a complimentary review (Minerd, 2000) in the monthly *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine. Indeed, Minerd closed his evaluation with the generous comment that Wilber's writing was "refreshingly free of the pontifications, careless generalizations, and self-admiration indulged in by other writers." He also opined that "devotees of Wilber ... would be a group of people that skeptics could, if not quite embrace, at least live alongside very easily."

Surprisingly, Wilber actually quotes approvingly from Martin Gardner, regarding the Anthropic Principle, in that same book. So, contrary to what one might reasonably assume from the rest of his work, he does at least realize that the skeptical position exists, even if entirely disrespecting it in practice.

Thankfully, Minerd did note disapprovingly that Wilber "implicitly accepts the reality of mystical experiences, and it is sufficient for him that his scientific mystics test their internal experiences against nothing more than each other's internal experiences.

How this would eliminate group bias or error is not discussed.” I have yet to find that obvious and *devastating* point addressed by Wilber himself anywhere in his own writings, before or since that review.

Interestingly, comparably flawed arguments as Wilber’s, in favor of the “scientific” nature of meditation-based religion, were put forth by Itzhak Bentov in the 1970s:

I am lucky to have met several people whose [meditative] experiences have been similar to mine, so that I have been able to compare my information with theirs. To my great surprise, our experiences agreed not only in general, but also in many unexpected details. This knowledge appears, therefore, to be consistent and *reproducible*.

(Wilber elsewhere [1982] quotes from other published aspects of Bentov’s work. It is therefore likely that he was aware of the earlier [1977] book from which the above quote is drawn. Or, if he wasn’t, as the “foremost theoretician in transpersonal psychology” he certainly should have been.)

Yet, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman (1989) more reasonably noted:

[T]he imagination that things are real does not represent true *reality*. If you see golden globes, or something, several times, and they talk to you during your hallucination and tell you they are another intelligence, it doesn’t *mean* they’re another intelligence; it just means that you have had this particular hallucination.

Further, a shared delusion, based on a common self-fulfilling expectation of experiencing “talking golden globes” or otherwise, is obviously no more real than is a hallucination confined to a single individual.

Wilber’s vaunted “community verification,” in practice within any closed environment, actually amounts to little more than an appeal to popularity and conformity. For, you can only be a “success” within those walls by seeing what the guru-figure and his “more spiritually advanced” (than you) disciples tell you that you should be glimpsing. Even the *external* experience of loyal followers seeing “miraculous coronas” (in guru Adi Da’s community, for

example) and the like, while skeptics were reportedly demoted for not seeing/imagining the same, has proved exactly that.

Sound objective research is not relevant to the true believer. In place of evidence and scientific validity, things are said to work ... by using social pressures to persuade people that they did work; i.e., by gradually interfering with the individual's ability to evaluate information (Penny, 1993).

If the same purported sages were actually able to prove their claimed abilities to see auras, do verifiable astral remote-viewing or manifest objective coronas, for example, in a properly controlled environment, one might have *some* basis for confidence in the reality of their other internal experiences, even if those subtler experiences were not otherwise scientifically testable. (There is, after all, no *a priori* reason why everything should be “scientifically testable,” in the physical laboratory or otherwise, in order to be “real.”) But short of that, Wilber's hope that any amount of community verification might sort fact from fiction in mystical claims falls flat on its face. For, there are clearly no controls whatsoever in place to guard against meditators simply experiencing what they *expect* to experience, and then viewing that as a confirmation of the truth of the metaphysical theory previously taught to them.

Without a satisfactory demonstration of the reality of such spiritual experiences, integral “Theories of Everything” might as well be theories of leprechauns, unicorns and Santa Claus. That is, one struggles to find more certain truth-value in them than in, say, Tolkien's Middle Earth. Impressive monuments to human imagination, to be sure; but hardly deserving of being taken seriously as mirrors of “authentic spirituality.”

That is so, particularly when the authors of the same wide-ranging integral ideas can be conclusively shown to have misunderstood and misrepresented so many of the established fields on which they base their “cutting edge” theories. Indeed, that would be a huge problem even were it not for the fact that the transpersonal data set, which they are creating their theories to explain, could hardly be more uncertain, i.e., as to which elements of it (if any) are valid, and which are spurious. Thus, even when reasoning clearly from that bad data, they end up effectively producing airtight arguments to prove how many integral angels can dance on the head of a pin, etc.—without having first bothered to properly

ascertain whether such angels, and their auras and subtle energies, even exist.

Nathaniel Branden has given his own (partial) critique of Wilber's transpersonal methodology in his (1999) *The Art of Living Consciously*. (Note that Branden explicitly **considers** kw to be "one of the most brilliant men I know." So, he can hardly be viewed as being biased against Wilber.)

[L]et us ask: Why should we believe the mystics' claims? On what grounds? Why should we even continue the discussion?

To this inquiry, Wilber mounts an interesting answer. It is given in his book *Eye to Eye*, which is an attempt to justify the validity of knowledge attained through "the eye of contemplation," the mystic's alleged tool of cognition....

[T]he process, we are told again and again, is in principle exactly the same as that by which one becomes a qualified scientist: knowledge is confirmed or disconfirmed according to whether qualified colleagues, having gone through the same steps, do or do not arrive at the same result. Experiments that are not reproducible or that do not yield the same results cannot be claimed to have revealed authentic truths. Therefore, in his or her own domain, the mystic's assertion of knowledge is fully as reliable as the scientist's....

In other words, it is *reasonable* to accept the truth of such [mystical] insights. *Reason is still conceded to be the final arbiter*. "It is logical to accept these nonlogical, nonrational insights because...."

That **I regard the argument as fallacious** is not my point here. My point is that, if one argues at all, there is no escape from using and counting on the very faculty mystics profess to have evolved "beyond." And this is the ultimate dilemma of anyone who is too conscientious simply to proclaim "It's true because I feel it."

We may not always arrive at our insights by a process of reason, but reason is the means by which we ultimately verify them—by what is sometimes called "reality testing"—that is, integrating them into the rest of our knowledge and observations without contradictions....

So what are we left with? A collection of assertions [by mystics, including Wilber himself] about the ultimate nature of existence that are riddled with contradictions, defy reason and logic, convey no intelligible meaning, invalidate our consciousness, destroy our concept of reality—and that we are

meant to take seriously while being told our limited development makes it impossible for us to understand them. If one does not have an intellectual inferiority complex and is not easily intimidated, this is not impressive.

Further with regard to the purported value of meditation in one’s own development, in Wilber’s (2000a) *One Taste* journals he states:

We now have abundant evidence that meditation does not alter or change the basic stages of the development of consciousness, but it does remarkably accelerate that development. Meditation speeds up evolution. It accelerates the remembering and the re-discovery of the Spirit that you eternally are. Meditation quickens the rate that acorns grow into oaks, that humans grow into God.

The closest that Wilber comes, in any of his books, to providing any actual evidence to support such claims is in his (1998) *The Eye of Spirit*:

[U]nlike most of the meditation teachers in this country, [Charles N. “Skip”] Alexander and his colleagues have been taking standard test of the various developmental lines (including Loevinger’s ego development, Kohlberg’s moral development, tests of capacity for intimacy, altruism, and so on) and applying them to populations of meditators, with extremely significant and telling results. The importance of this line of research is simply incalculable.

Yet, the **endnote** associated with that same set of complimentary statements offers these significant caveats:

This is not to overlook what appear to be some valid criticisms of some of the TM® research [e.g., as performed by Skip Alexander], including occasional bias in the researchers, inadequate methodology, and obliviousness to negative effects on practitioners. But even when those inadequacies are taken into account, what’s left of the research is still quite impressive.

One might have hoped that such highly relevant information would be featured prominently in the text, rather than being consigned to a tiny-font endnote. Such “valid criticisms” and “inade-

quacies”—i.e., red flags such as “occasional bias in the researchers, inadequate methodology, and obliviousness to negative effects on practitioners”—after all, might well be sufficiently disturbing for one to reasonably reject Alexander’s Transcendental Meditation®-based research altogether. (Indeed, given Wilber’s willing acceptance of aspects of that research which he wants to believe, one cannot help but wonder how much worse the methodology would have had to be before it was worthy of rejection. Knowing the dismally low standards of proof in transpersonal and integral psychology, one can only assume: “A lot.”)

Further, regarding the admitted “negative effects on practitioners” of meditation: Would a prominent warning about that not have been merely ethical, given Wilber’s continuing encouragement to others to take up meditative practice, even to the point of presenting that practice as a “moral imperative”? It is difficult to give voluntary informed consent, after all, when information is being withheld from oneself by persons whom one trusts to at least get that much right.

Interestingly, the CD and audio cassette programs of kw’s (2003c) *Kosmic Consciousness* talks contain the following phrase: “I mention Skip Alexander who was a real genius and a real pioneer in this, and I still recommend looking into his work.” That seven-second phrase, however, has been skillfully deleted from the online audio sample of the same program available on the [Sounds True](#) website.

Wilber continues, in the same audio program:

[I]f you take people who are [raising kids and making money] and they meditate about an hour a day, then about four years later, they’re **two stages higher** on any scale that we give them. Meditation is the only thing that’s been empirically demonstrated to vertically move people to that degree.

That would be impressive if it were true. But the only evidence which kw ever gives of such claims comes, again, from the end-notes in *The Eye of Spirit*, where we read:

For example, 1 percent of a college control sample scored at Loevinger’s highest two stages (autonomous and integrated), whereas in a similar sample of regular meditators, 38 percent reached those stages....

That 38 percent broke through this ceiling with meditation is quite extraordinary. Moreover, if the Loevinger test is slightly modified to be more sensitive to those at the higher stages, 87 percent in one meditating population broke the conscientious barrier, with 36 percent scoring autonomous and 29 percent integrated. Alexander et al. (1990), p. 333.

Wilber’s exposition then leaves one wondering: Does the original research describe an experimental methodology whereby people are tested to establish a baseline, then they meditate an hour a day for four years, then they are re-tested and found to be one or two levels higher? And was that done against a control group, who did no meditation? (Or, even better, to account for the influence of “expectation effects” in the test group, were members of the control group given an “anti-meditation” technique—such as pacing and focusing on problems—but told that it was a “meditation” which would have the same anticipated effects of psychological growth?) And were the members of the test and the control group randomly assigned from the pool of subjects?

Short of such an adequate methodology, Wilber’s own description of Alexander’s studies indicates only that people at the highest stages of Loevinger’s scale of ego development tend to meditate, not that meditation is what caused them to be in those high stages. That is a correlation, at best, not a cause-effect relationship; it could just as well be that independent evolution to the highest stages of Loevinger’s scale of ego development was what caused the same people to begin meditating, or that something else caused people to both grow/evolve/develop to the highest stages of Loevinger’s scale and to meditate.

Even if kw (and Alexander himself) hasn’t confused correlation with causation, though—and we will see shortly that they *have* thus confused things—he is still basing an awful lot of the practical side of his “integral religion” on a few *admittedly flawed* studies. As a basis for either a science or a philosophy, that is a miserably inadequate approach. Further, even if all of that were to turn out to be valid—and even if meditation, in spite of its frequent negative side-effects (to be detailed later), were to measurably advance one’s psychological evolution—there is still no necessary paranormal claim to any of it. That is, it still does nothing to substantiate the purported reality of the transpersonal levels of Wilber’s four quadrants.

If one actually makes the effort to wade through the relevant chapter in Alexander and Langer's *Higher Stages of Human Development*, past the 40+ pages of "Vedic theory" and respectful references to the Maharishi's "seven levels of consciousness," one finally reaches the Research Appendix. There, all of the details of Alexander's "solid and ... repeated" research (in Wilber's unduly optimistic evaluation) are revealed.

Thus, from pages 331-2 of Alexander's book:

In two samples (total $n = 90$) of maximum security prisoners followed over a **one-year** period, both long-term and new TM subjects significantly improved by **one step** on ego development in comparison to wait-list controls, **dropouts**, and those not interested in learning TM (controlling for pre-test scores and demographic covariates). None of the four other treatment groups followed **longitudinally** [i.e., over the passage of time] changed significantly on this measure (Alexander, 1982). On the average, regular new meditators (who scored at a concrete operational level at pretest) improved from the "conformist" stage of ego development (corresponding to dominance of concrete thinking) to the "self-aware" level (corresponding to the onset of reflective functioning of the intellect); and regular advanced meditators shifted from the self-aware level to a "conscientious" stage (corresponding to a mature form of abstract reflection).

This advance of **one step** for the new meditators over a **year** period substantially exceeds that for college students over a **four-year** period (Loevinger et al., 1985), yet at an age (26–29 years) and education level (ninth grade) where such changes are unlikely to occur. **Assuming** [!] that the advanced TM subjects started at a comparable ego level to the new TM group, they advanced a mean of **two steps** during less than three years.

So that is presumably where Wilber has gotten his "four years" and "two stages" information from, in his *Kosmic Consciousness* claim that "if you take people ... and they meditate about an hour a day, then about four years later, they're two stages higher on any scale we give them."

The problem with Wilber's presentation of that research, though, is that unless he has some other (unidentified) source for those claims, he is conflating several different studies into one—

and that latter study, as he presents it, was never actually performed:

- The prisoners in Alexander's study did TM for *one* year, not four
- From their one year of meditation, Alexander's subjects stage-grew by *one* step (in comparison to the control group), not two
- The college students in Loevinger's 1985 study were indeed tested over a four-year period ... but they were not meditating as part of the study. (If any of them were doing other forms of meditation on their own, that is just one more uncontrolled uncertainty in that second supposed "control" group)

Even if Alexander's prison-inmate subject study had otherwise been unassailable, it at most showed a one-step (not two) improvement in the psychological stage-development of its subjects over a period of one year (not four). Wilber's "two steps" are based on an *assumption*, explicitly stated as such by Alexander, which may or may not be valid. Yet kw presents it, either foolishly or dishonestly, as if it had actually been inarguably proved in controlled studies. It is an *assumption* which is potentially open to all kinds of selection biases, etc.

You cannot tell from Alexander's summarized write-up how the "new meditators" were chosen from the prison population. It is unlikely, at any rate, that the group was selected randomly from the inmates. In fact, since the study had a group of subjects who were "not interested in learning TM," there was an inherent selection bias in its protocol. Comparing that *self-selected* group (minus its dropouts!) to Loevinger's *randomly-selected* population (from a completely different study), by saying that "our meditators advanced more in one year than your normal students did in four," is just about nonsensical. It certainly has none of the scientific validity which kw presents it as having. (Amazingly, that prison study was Alexander's 1982 doctoral dissertation at Harvard.)

If Alexander had at least taken the self-selected prisoners who "wanted to learn TM," and split them into one group which was given the "real mantras," and another which was given fake or anti-meditation techniques, any measured differences between those two groups would have been impressive. As it stands, what

he has done is just plain foolish, both in his own study and in the comparison to Loevinger's competently executed work.

Plus, Alexander's research was all done on practitioners of Transcendental Meditation. The results *might* well generalize to other forms of meditation, but one cannot merely assume, as Wilber does, that they will thus generalize.

Further, again from kw's *Kosmic Consciousness* talks:

Another way to measure [the value of meditation] is to take the number of people that are at a particular stage of development in a particular development line like Jane Loevinger, and in her case, what she would call our level six, our integral level on our seven-level generic scale, she finds about 2 percent of the population reaches that stage. And after **four years** of meditation, **38 percent** of people doing it reach that stage.

And from *The Eye of Spirit*:

That 38 percent broke through this ceiling with meditation is quite extraordinary. Moreover, if the Loevinger test is slightly modified to be more sensitive to those at the higher stages, **87 percent** in one meditating population broke the conscientious barrier, with 36 percent scoring autonomous and 29 percent integrated. Alexander et al. (1990), p. 333.

But: It was *eleven* years of meditation, not *four*, that got 38 percent of Alexander's subjects to test at the autonomous/integrated level! From pages 332-3 of Alexander's book:

A longitudinal study ... compared change in ego development over an **11-year** period in graduates from Maharishi International University (MIU), where the TM program is incorporated into the college curriculum, to change in graduates from three well-known universities offering standard curricula.... From the pool of respondents from each of the control universities, students were matched as closely as possible with MIU graduates on gender, pretest age, and college class (i.e., cohort group). All subjects (total $n = 136$) were at least 19 years of age at pretest during the late 1970s. Most MIU graduates were currently regular in TM practice; most control subjects also indicated that they currently practiced some form of self-development, stress-management, or exer-

cise program for promoting physical and mental health (although none practiced TM)....

Whereas at pretest 9 percent of the MIU sample scored at Loevinger's higher "autonomous" and "integrated" stages, at posttest **38 percent** reached these two highest stages.

So, when Wilber says that four years of meditation got 38 percent of subjects to the "integral level," that's just plain false, from a man who cannot even quote the protocols from a simple longitudinal study accurately.

(Likewise, ten years of TM practice underlay the study that had 87 percent scoring above the conscientious level. Page 333 of Alexander's book makes that explicit.)

In the "38 percent" study, too, the meditators were self-selected, even though later being "matched up" (thus, potential rater/selection bias) against their control peers. So, that group went from 9 percent of them being autonomous/integrated to 38 percent of them being at those levels, while the control group had only 1 percent at those "two highest stages at both pretest and posttest." In a total of a mere 136 subjects from MIU and three control universities.

Even if there had been no selection or rater bias involved there, having only 136 total subjects means that exactly one person in the control group was at autonomous/integrated before, and after, the testing. So, there we have inadequately small study sizes for measuring states of development that are rare to begin with.

Further, consider that people on the verge of breaking through to the higher levels, or those having an explicit interest in and expectation for psychological growth, etc., might well choose to meditate and/or enroll in MIU from that cause, thus introducing a non-causal correlation between meditation and psychological stage-growth as the study proceeded. (Such interests and expectations can affect one's performance on written tests of maturity, too. That is, expectation effects apply to those tests, even if expectations themselves don't create psychological stage-growth. Loevinger had to explicitly take that into account in planning the testing for her 1985 study. Alexander evidently has not proceeded with the same professional care.)

Given all that, Alexander's studies, so valued and unduly praised by Wilber, have proved *nothing*.

The growth from 9 percent to 38 percent may well be causative rather than a mere correlation; who knows? But with Alexander's shoddy selection protocols and otherwise, a four-fold growth from 1 percent to 4 percent in their "control" group could have been just as significant, and meant exactly the same thing. For the sample size used (i.e., a control group of around 65, presumably), that growth from 1 percent to 4 percent represents just a *couple of people* in the control group breaking through.

So there are issues there, not merely with regard to protocol, but even just in terms of basic statistical significance.

And, note that 9 percent of the final 38 percent *were already at the integral level* when the study began. Assuming that there was no measurable regression of the subjects' levels in that study, then as far as *growth* to that level goes: Only $38\% - 9\% = 27\%$ of the subjects *grew* to the integral level, of the $100\% - 9\% = 91\%$ who weren't already at it. That is, only $27/91 = 32\%$ who weren't *already* "spiritually evolved" managed to *grow* to the integral level. Over a period of *eleven years*. Conversely, 68 percent didn't experience the same growth, via meditation.

And that's supposed to be (in Wilber's words) the "doorway to God"? Something that (even neglecting all of the serious problems in the protocol) only works in any significant way for one-third of the people, over a period of more than a decade of regular practice?

And for the two-thirds who did not thus grow, what might they have done productively with their lives in the hours which they had otherwise devoted to meditation? What have they lost, in sitting and chanting nonsense-syllables to themselves?

Interestingly, the above-mentioned study by Jane Loevinger, et al. (1985) showed female university students demonstrating a "slight but consistent loss" of ego development from their freshman to their senior years. That loss, in turn, "challenges one assumption of a widely accepted version of Piagetian theory (i.e., that stage development is irreversible)."

Conversely, though, as Loevinger notes, "Piaget can hardly be cited for the frequent assumption that moral or ego development occurs according to a strict stage sequence, rarely admitting of backsliding. In his study of the development of moral judgment, Piaget (1932) went out of his way to reiterate that there are no strict stages. Even with respect to capacity for formal operations, Piaget (1972) warned of backsliding in young adults outside their own specialties."

(Wilber [1996] actually admits that such regression can occur, as does Alexander. KW, however, qualifies [via Stanislav Grof] the causes of that regression by saying that "under intense stress, or with certain types of meditation, or certain drugs, the self can regress to this [lowest] fulcrum and relive its various subphases and traumas, which tends to alleviate the pathology." None of those factors, of course, have anything to do with being outside of one's formop specialties. Nor was the regression found in Loevinger's study merely a short-term, coping response to "intense stress," etc.)

Obviously, if one can backslide from formop even just for being outside of one's specialties, attempting to correlate such stages of psychological development with three other quadrants (objective, cultural and social), as Wilber does, would scarcely be possible. That is so even were there widespread agreement in the field of development psychology as to the validity of Piaget's stages (which, as Meyerhoff earlier pointed out for us, there is not).

Of further interest, Loevinger notes that dormitory/fraternity/sorority life has been found to have a "constricting rather than a liberalizing effect with respect particularly to critical thinking," and thus to one's higher scoring on measures of psychological maturity. The worst possible combination for encouraging psychological growth, then, would surely be to live in a fraternity-like residence under a leader who can ostensibly do no wrong.

Ashrams, monasteries, and even integral institutes surely meet that criterion. Because even without living in residence in the latter, you cannot deeply question the "spiritually advanced" leaders if you hope to remain a member in good standing in the community. Rather, use your own mind in that environment to think critically about what you're being fed, and you will very quickly be demoted to the status of pariah, as we shall see.

As critics of the Ayn Rand cult have noted, "when people identify too closely with their system of beliefs, they have no choice but defend them tooth and nail from any hint of cognitive dissonance." That applies to integral beliefs and heroes just as surely as it does to Rand's Objectivist ones. It applies to groups of skeptics and scientists, too, except that the proper application of the scientific method works to eventually sort fact from fiction, limiting the length of time through which one can fool oneself.

Never forget that when Max Planck spoke of new ideas in science being accepted not for any logic of persuasion but simply for the older generation dying out and being replaced by a new group

who had grown up with the more-radical view of reality, he was not talking about religious believers being unable to think clearly. Rather, he was directing that observation toward the supposedly rational *scientific community* itself.

In Wilber's (1999) response to John Heron's "not even wrong" (as Wolfgang Pauli would say, quite rightly) critique of his theories, he again pretended: "[O]ne study showed that, among individuals who meditated for **several** years, an astonishing 38 percent reached those higher stages." (Of course, the study in question again actually covered *eleven* years, not merely "several.")

The astonishing thing there is that Wilber, in point #16 of that same response, actually referenced Michael Murphy, et al.'s (1997) *The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation*. So he knows very well—assuming that he has actually read that book, as opposed to having merely cited it without having assimilated it—how meditation, far from being the "doorway to God," can utterly destroy people's lives. For, in the final, "Negative Experiences" section in **Chapter 4** of that book, we read:

Long-term meditators reported the following percentages of adverse effects: antisocial behavior, 13.5%; anxiety, 9.0%; confusion, 7.2%; depression, 8.1%; emotional stability, 4.5%; frustration, 9.0%; physical and mental tension, 8.1%; procrastination, 7.2%; restlessness, 9.0%; suspiciousness, 6.3%; tolerance of others, 4.5%; and withdrawal, 7.2%....

Ellis (1984) stated that meditation's greatest danger was its common connection with spirituality and antiscience. He said that it might encourage some individuals to become even more obsessive-compulsive than they had been and to dwell in a ruminative manner on trivia or nonessentials. He also noted that some of his clients had gone into "dissociative semi-trance states and upset themselves considerably by meditating"....

Hassett (1978) reported that meditation can be harmful. Carrington (1977) observed that extensive meditation may induce symptoms that range in severity from insomnia to **psychotic manifestations with hallucinatory behavior**. Lazarus (1976) reported that psychiatric problems such as **severe depression and schizophrenic breakdown** may be precipitated by TM.... Glueck and Stroebel (1975) reported that two experimental subjects made independent suicide attempts in the first two days after beginning the TM program.

That, not claimed-but-utterly-unproven psychological stage-growth even over decades of practice, is what any group (integral or otherwise) that encourages you to meditate, for whatever reason, is really offering you. (Note: Personally, I have had nothing but good results from meditation. Other people have not been so fortunate.)

Of course Murphy, with his deep transpersonal and integral biases and affiliations, cannot resist trying to put a positive spin on all that:

Though the rewards of contemplative practice can be great, they do not come easily.

So, if meditation is producing clinically psychotic behaviors in you, apparently you just have to “work harder” at it. (That is, of course, exactly the remedy which your teacher and peers will suggest. And to not go along with that *bad* advice is effectively to admit that you are not fit or ready for the “fast track to enlightenment.”)

Fear not, though: according to Wilber in his *Kosmic Consciousness*, CD 8 Track 9, prayer may be as valuable as meditation for psycho-spiritual growth:

Interviewer: So it’s possible that [contemplative] prayer could move you up **two levels** in a similar way as meditation?

KW: Yes, I believe, I absolutely believe that....

[Transcendental Meditation] has one advantage in that it’s such a lineage practice, so to speak, there’s a **morphogenic field** around it, if you will, it’s so well developed, that when people take up that practice, it has almost immediate effects. Other practices are harder to get into, they’re more sort of difficult. Zen is very difficult to do right; you have to practice it really for months, or even years, to really get into it. But TM, really within the first couple of sessions, you’re really kind of getting the hang of it [so] it’s an ideal type of meditation for research, because there’s a similarity in people that practice it ... you can actually learn something by looking at people who do it. And people who do it for a very long time get into some of these very profound states, including twenty-four-hour-a-day subtle constant consciousness....

Would “contemplative prayer ... show the same stage-movement as the other types of meditation”? It probably would, keeping in mind that:

- The “research on meditation moving two stages” doesn’t actually exist, but is apparently rather just the product of Wilber conflating a number of different studies by Alexander, none of which were done with anything resembling **proper protocols** in the first place
- Former accredited *teachers* of TM, who can certainly do the exercises properly, have been among its most vociferous critics (cf. www.suggestibility.org)
- The “profound states” which Wilber mentions, including the simultaneous existence of alpha and delta rhythms in the brain, even *if* that has been measured exactly as kw gives it, present no parapsychological or transpersonal claim or proof. Rather, it can just as well be simply an untapped ability of the “purely physical” brain, with or without interior feelings having an ontological reality on top of that. The same thing applies for Witnessing consciousness in general: resting in That, with the internal feeling that one has “no boundaries,” doesn’t even remotely mean that one really *is* infinite in consciousness. (Comparably, subjective feelings of astral traveling do not mean that one really *is* doing that—i.e., doing it to the point of, say, being able to read a five-figure number off of a designated wall, which is how these things are easily and competently tested, and invariably found to not be what their imaginative proponents claim)
- Zen is many times more a “lineage practice” than is TM: Fifteen hundred years of lineage and practice, versus a few decades for any widespread use of Transcendental Meditation. (Obviously mantra yoga in general is much older. But it is Wilber who is focusing specifically on TM, here, and touting the benefits of its “lineage.”) And how is counting or watching one’s breaths in *zazen* more difficult to learn to do, and make progress with, than is internally chanting a mantra?

So yes, prayer is likely just as (in)effective as meditation. Indeed, it is probably even a better option, as it doesn't have the range of psychotic side-effects which meditation tends to have.

Either way, though, Wilber's claim that meditation leads regularly to measurable psychological stage-growth is no more supportable than are his ideas on the "science of meditation."

None of those realities, however, have had any effect whatsoever on kw's claims for the purported transformative value of meditation, even as made in his (2006e) *Integral Spirituality*:

[M]editation can help move you *an average of two vertical stages* in four years.

In the same book, Wilber repeated his self-serving but utterly false claims that "whereas around two percent of the adult population is at second tier, after four years of meditation, that two percent goes to 38 percent in the meditation group," and that proponents of Intelligent Design allegedly demand that "the Jehovah of Genesis" be the Eros driving the evolution of the Kosmos. All of those repeated untruths, of course, came from his pen well after the disproofs given herein were provided, online, even in his own Integral Naked forum.

CHAPTER V

KOSMIC PARAPSYCHOLOGY

[Wilber] excoriates the suggestion of some New Age authors that we can overcome any disease or hardship if our faith in our own minds is strong enough; this claim, Wilber points out, implies that it is our fault if we cannot cure our own cancer (Horgan, 2003a).

THE BELIEF THAT WE CAN “overcome any disease or hardship if our faith in our own minds is strong enough,” or via laying-on-of-hands flows of healing energy from others, is indeed found throughout the New Age community—even though no convincing scientific evidence of that possibility exists. And certainly, if either of those abilities are anything more than imagination—or even if psychic phenomena in general exist—there can be few if any limits to what the human mind can do. Nor is such an attitude so far removed from Wilber’s own belief system as one might assume from the preceding quote:

Ken Wilber, as eager as he is to project a scientifically conservative image, once stated, “I’m sure [psychic phenomena] exist” (Horgan, 2003a).

Or, as kw himself elsewhere (1991) put it:

As I lay in bed, I noticed a series of subtle energy currents running through my body, which felt very much like the so-called kundalini energy, which, in Eastern religions, is said to be the energy of spiritual awakening, an energy that lies dormant, asleep, until aroused by an appropriate person or event.

In describing, to his second wife, his own experiences in a session with a laying-on-of-hands healer, he expounded further:

I could definitely feel the energy moving.... I think something actually does happen with gifted healers (Wilber, 1991).

If such energy flows exist, however, there is no reason why their intensity could not be increased by relevant practice, to affect oneself or others in both spiritual awakening and in *profound healing*, e.g., even of cancer. (Conversely, in the same view, a long-term restriction of such flows within one’s own body could result in illness, as Brennan [1987] and many others have asserted.) Indeed, that increase is the very basis of the claimed temporary and partial transmission of enlightenment via *shaktipat* and *darshan* (i.e., the blessing which is said to flow from even the mere sight of a saint):

Since *shakti* is the divine energy, and since the guru is concerned with the transference of divine power, the use of that energy in such a transfer produces an immediate impact. That is *shaktipat*—the almost instantaneous transfer of divine energy, by touch or word or even look, from the guru to the [disciple] (Brent, 1972).

Further, with regard to the claimed power of the mind in healing, as the widely admired sage Aurobindo (1953)—one of Wilber’s evident heroes—himself put it:

It is my experience and the [spiritual partner] Mother’s that all illnesses pass through the subtle consciousness and subtle body before they enter the physical. If one is conscious, one can stop it entering the physical, one can develop the

power to do so. We have done that millions of times.... Self-defense may become so strong that the body becomes practically immune as many yogis' are.

Incidentally, Wilber has been criticized, in Kazlev (2004) and Hemsell (2002), for having significantly misrepresented Aurobindo's philosophy in his (kw's) own writings; but that is a separate issue.

Wilber's second wife sadly died after a long battle with cancer, providing the context in which he was first confronted in a highly emotional way with often crassly applied New Age "blaming/responsibility" ideas regarding disease. (Having lost my own mother in the same way, I deeply sympathize with the suffering and support entailed.) He himself further weathered a mysterious, exhausting illness (RNase Enzyme Deficiency Disease, REDD) for several years in the mid-'80s, the long-term effects of which, as of 2002, again had him largely bedridden. He also suffered through the aforementioned six-month staph infection, in which he lost access to the always-already One Taste state. Those points are surely not irrelevant to his attitude toward the power of the mind with regard to cancer and other illnesses, as expressed above.

It is one thing to disparage New Agers for being "regressive" or "pre-rational" in their reliance on astrology, etc. But why be so bothered by them simply ascribing more power to the human mind in the potential for healing than you feel is appropriate? And if Wilber really has no tolerance for the "pre-rational" idea that we can heal our illnesses through the power of our own (or of others') minds and the associated/believed energy flows, why does he (2002) have his third (ex-)wife "doing industrial strength reiki" on him, in battling the effects of his REDD?

If the woman in question can truly direct the flow of subtle energies, or even if Wilber himself can genuinely feel those beyond mere imagination, there are any number of skeptical organizations throughout the world which offer significant monetary prizes for the simple proof of that. Short of their demonstrations of those claimed skills in a properly controlled environment, however, the *much* more likely explanation, for any betting man or woman, is that they are both simply imagining the beneficial effects of her "healings."

Of course, while insisting that "something actually does happen with gifted healers," Wilber has simultaneously disputed their

interpretations of the effects of the subtle energies which they purport to be able to move. But if such healers can actually see auras and chakras, and move subtle energies, how could they so utterly misinterpret the results of their related attempted healings? For, those purported results would surely be visible *in exactly the same auras*. (Brennan [1993], for one, explicitly claims exactly that clear, unmistakable visibility.) Thus, there is precisely nothing that is open to “interpretation” in those healers’ claims. Nor should one feel the least bit comfortable in accepting the existence of subtle energies simply for one’s own easily fooled or imagined experience of those in non-double-blind environments, as is the case when kw vouches for their existence ... or touts (2005) the value of the Q-Link pendant for that matter, claiming:

The Q-Link is a technology that amplifies and clarifies the body’s energies. By reducing the noise in any energy field, this technology strengthens and purifies the body’s own energies.

Beyond that, Wilber’s aforementioned excoriating of New Age believers for their innocent position on healing cannot be meant simply to “spiritually awaken them.” On the contrary, their denigrated view simply demands more responsibility than he evidently wishes to ascribe to human actions—including his own and those of his late wife. Indeed, that belief in the power of the mind, whether valid or not, is no more (and no less) pre-rational or magical than is kw’s own acceptance of psychic phenomena, and his own acknowledged (even if merely imagined) perception of subtle energy flows, from claimed healers and otherwise.

Wilber’s second wife actually entertained similar ideas to these (with regard to responsibility), at a point where she felt that he was blaming her for his lack of interest, at that time, in book writing:

[H]e may not want to feel responsible himself, it might be easier for him to think it’s [my] fault. What might be behind that? Maybe he’s afraid it’s his fault. Maybe he doesn’t want to take responsibility for his not writing....

Later that day I checked this scenario out with Ken, but very gently, no blame. He gave me a gold star, I hit it pretty close on the nose (in Wilber, 1991).

In any case, such patterns of behavior as Wilber admitted to his own late wife never confine themselves to any one aspect or incident in a person's life. Rather, they shape all aspects of one's existence, whether or not one is consciously aware of that.

Of myth and magic, now, kw (2000b) has stated:

Unless otherwise indicated, when I use the word "mythic" it refers to preformal, concrete-literal mythic images and symbols, some aspects of which are in fact imbued with cognitive inadequacies, for these myths claim as empirical fact many things that can be empirically disproved—e.g., the volcano erupts because it is personally mad at you; the clouds move because they are following you. These preformal mythic beliefs, scholars from Piaget to Joseph Campbell have noted, are always egocentrically focused and literally/concretely believed.

Consider, then, Wilber's (1991; italics added) own attitude toward the possible effect of his second wife's death on the weather, where 115 mph gale-force winds beat the surrounding area at exactly the point of her passing:

The winds, *I suppose*, were coincidence. Nonetheless, the constant rattling and shaking of the house simply added to the feeling that something unearthly was happening. I remember trying to go back to sleep, but the house was rattling so hard I got up and put some blankets around the windows in the bedroom, fearing they would shatter. I finally drifted off, thinking, "Treya is dying, nothing is permanent, everything is empty, Treya is dying...."

That, as a simple reporting of facts, is fine. However, years later, in his (2000a) journals, Wilber "coincidentally" reprinted a letter he received from the spouse of a hospitalized, terminal cancer sufferer, who had been touched by Treya's story:

As [my wife] died in the afternoon a great storm and strong rain came up. And I saw a great grey cloud going upstairs from her body and drifting away out of the opened window. After twenty minutes the storm was over.

It is difficult to imagine Wilber including *that specific letter* in his reprints without it being implicitly in support of a "cosmic" na-

ture to his own experiences. That is so even in spite of his previous "I suppose" (as opposed to a skeptical/rational "of course") regard for the "coincidental" nature of the winds blowing during his wife's death. After all, with the "great storm and strong rain" being explicitly associated with a "great grey cloud" rising from the dying person's body in the fan-letter case, could it really have been just coincidence for a similar storm to have arisen in his own wife's death? (If Wilber thought that that grey cloud and accompanying storm were pre-rational nonsense, he need not have included them in his own reprint of the letter. For, they are not at all essential to the man's story.)

If Wilber's winds were real parapsychological phenomena, beyond mere coincidence or imagination, that would mean that real magic exists, in the ability of human thoughts, intentions and/or emotions (i.e., subtle bodies) to affect the physical world. And in that case, New Agers could not rationally be excoriated for believing in such things. Rather, they should then instead be celebrated for having "correctly" divined and appreciated that aspect of reality. (The fan's wife made no recorded claim to be highly realized, yet still purportedly manifested that windy "magic." Thus, such claimed phenomena could not be restricted here only to the powers supposedly possessed by "great Realizers," etc.)

Short of Treya's death actually having affected, via real magic, the same winds which blow not merely for Wilber but for all of us, his implicit view of that phenomenon

is simply reflective of mythic and magical thinking. That's okay, but it's not rational and if Wilber were to critique his own episode he would see it (via his spectrum psychology paradigm) as being "immature" (less inclusive, less rational, etc.)....

Thus when I said Wilber was being narcissistic in his analysis of those winds, I was using the very adjective that Wilber himself on several occasions has used to illustrate a pre/trans fallacy, a mistake where the New Ager or whomever in question sees something mystical when it was merely mythic, where someone sees something paranormal when it was merely normal (Lane, 1996).

Note that Lane insightfully spotted that point a full four years prior to Wilber's reprinting of the "grey cloud" fan letter.

In relation to all of the above paranormality, further consider the following recent perspective from Wilber (2003) himself, in expounding on the nature of the chakras in his “comprehensive theory of subtle energies”:

I will ... simply use one example: the overall summary of the chakras given by Hiroshi Motoyama.

Wilber then goes on to explain, for his own demonstrative purposes, Motoyama’s standard and non-controversial “theories of the chakras,” from his book of the same name. (Motoyama himself is founder and president of the California Institute for Human Science: www.cihs.edu.)

There is, however, much more to Motoyama’s (2000) *Karma and Reincarnation* worldview than that:

Ritual offerings of food and water are truly effective ways of helping beings suffering in the astral dimension, particularly the souls of people who have recently died. When we place an offering upon the altar, we don’t expect it to disappear because we know that someone who has died cannot eat physical substances. When we expand our field of vision into the higher dimensions, however, we can actually see spirits consuming the offerings. They are consuming the “ki” [i.e., the *chi* or *prana*] of the food and water, the astral energy of the objects that exists even before the object manifests into the physical world.

One assumes that Wilber would not himself endorse these latter claims—of spirits eating subtle energy, etc. If not, however, *why not?* If Motoyama’s clairvoyant perceptions of the chakras are taken as valid, why would his comparable perceptions, *through the same subtle senses*, of ghosts and astral gods not be taken as equally valid? Did he see the chakras validly and clearly, but hallucinate everything else? If not, how can you justify “picking and choosing” only what you want to believe from those perceptions?

Of course, if such phenomena as Motoyama describes really do exist, a lot of what Wilber denigrates as being “pre-rational” or the product of regressive magical or mythical thought would again not be so. Rather, it would instead be appealing to aspects of reality which simply do not fit into his own theories. That point would apply specifically to sacrifices to nature spirits or to human ghosts

who could *very conceivably* actually be "personally mad at you." Indeed, Motoyama (2000) describes exactly such appeased ghostly anger in the very same book, along with his psychic interactions with water and tree spirits:

Yoichi had been dead for 800 years, yet his tortured spirit was still able to affect me when I began to build our retreat center. We began to pray for his soul in the Shrine. After three years of such prayers, his resentment dissolved and I no longer experienced any negativity.

I could see that the Spirit of the tree was grieving about its impending doom.

I saw that the Water Spirit was understandably outraged and was retaliating by causing the family its present problems.

It is no large step from tree and water spirits to volcano and cloud spirits; if the former were to exist, surely the latter would, too. And according to Motoyama, the former do indeed exist, as surely (or unsurely) as do the chakras which in turn figure into Wilber's theories of psychological/spiritual development and subtle energy.

Stepping further out from there into the New Age, then, Wilber (2003b) has bravely conjectured:

Internality is the form of spacetime's self-prehension, a self-organization through self-transcendence (to put it in dry third-person terms), or—in first-person terms much more accurate—the love that moves the sun and other stars.

Interestingly, the tail end of the above block quote is actually taken, without attribution, from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The overall block itself comes from a series of excerpts from a forthcoming planned book in Wilber's "Kosmos" trilogy, the first installment of which was his *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*—"one of the most significant books ever published," according to Larry Dossey.

From Part 4 of that same online "Excerpt G":

The major theorists addressed [in my "comprehensive theory of subtle energies"] include Rupert Sheldrake, Michael Murphy, William Tiller ... Deepak Chopra, Hiroshi Motoyama,

Marilyn Schlitz, Larry Dossey, and Gary Schwartz, among others. I am a great fan of all of those theorists, and much of this integral theory has been developed over the years in discussion with many of them.

Corresponding to his unfounded belief in subtle energies, paranormal winds, and the abilities of the above “theorists,” Wilber has given the impression of believing that the infamous “Maharishi Effect” is real. From page 433 of *Boomeritis*, with the Jonathan character speaking:

There is a very large body of empirical evidence showing that when 1 percent of the population of a town, say, begins to meditate, then crime statistics all go down sharply. Murder, rape, theft, they all go down. It’s called “the Maharishi [E]ffect,” and **even skeptics admit that it’s a real phenomenon.**

“Even skeptics admit that it’s a real phenomenon”? Pure nonsense! Skeptics *do not* regard the “Maharishi Effect” as being a real phenomenon. James Randi, in fact, had given a debunking of that purported effect as early as 1982, in his *Flim-Flam!* Martin Gardner, likewise, in 1995 dismissed the Maharishi Effect as being “supported, of course, by highly dubious statistics.” (Members of the Maharishi’s university, though, have given their own [Rainforth, 2000] “detailed rebuttal” to at least one critique of their “voodoo science.”)

Randi and Gardner were voted as being the *top two* “outstanding skeptics” of the twentieth century, in the very same issue of *Skeptical Inquirer* where Wilber’s *Marriage of Sense and Soul* was given an unduly tolerant review.

If you want to know how little Wilber’s name and work are respected in the skeptical community even now, consider this: In the autumn of 2001, I attempted to interest Randi in testing Wilber’s own (2000a) claims, of being able to stop his brainwaves at will. I simultaneously informed him that kw was considered to be “at the top of his professional field.” I also let him know that Wilber had served on the same Board of Editors of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* as does Stanley Krippner, with whom James works regularly. (Krippner actually wrote the foreword for Rothberg’s anthology, *Ken Wilber in Dialogue*.)

Randi responded tersely that he had “never even heard of” kw, and expressed his disdain at the prospect of having to “chase after” Wilber (and after the claimed spiritual healer Barbara Ann Brennan, of whom he had equally not heard). That response was given even while Randi was simultaneously and explicitly “chasing after” *many* others, with regard to their potential participation in his million-dollar Paranormal Challenge. The clear implication there was that, given Randi’s own high position in the skeptical world, if Wilber were anyone of note, Randi would already be familiar with his work.

Of course, since kw’s aforementioned book was again reviewed in the very same “outstanding skeptics” issue of *SI* in which Randi was voted as the #1 skeptic of the twentieth century, chances are rather amazingly good that James *had* actually at least heard of Wilber’s work, even if later having that fact slip his mind. Brennan, too, has been mentioned briefly in other issues (e.g., [Park, 1997](#)) of the same magazine. And yes, however absurd it may be, both Wilber and Brennan are indeed widely regarded as being at the top of their respective “professional” fields by their peers.

Stumbling further into parapsychology, we find Wilber making the following claims in his (2001d) CD, *Speaking Of Everything*:

KW: U.C. Irvine had been given, I don’t know, a \$500,000 dollar grant or something to do another series of psychic research.... And I said basically that I think that was a misuse of money. Because the real problem is that we have meta-analysis on psychic phenomena....

E.com: Yeah, [Dean Radin](#)’s book [*The Conscious Universe*]. It’s fabulous.

KW: That’s right. It puts it **beyond dispute**, and **every statistician agrees**. So I said take your \$500,000 and buy a fucking P.R. firm.

E.com: Right.

KW: Because you people **just have bad press**. Another experiment is not going to change. It’s already **one hundred percent certain**.

One can, however, easily locate a *statistical* refutation of Radin’s analysis, by Ray Hyman and J. McCrone, at *The Skeptic’s Dictionary* ([Carroll, 2005a](#)). The conclusions which follow from it

refer to exactly the same book which kw regards as being unassailable:

Based on the results of these experiments, Radin claims that “researchers have produced persuasive, consistent, replicated evidence that mental intention is associated with the behavior of ... physical systems” (Radin 1997: 144). That sounds like a hasty conclusion to me. He also claims that “the experimental results are not likely due to chance, selective reporting, poor experimental design, only a few individuals, or only a few experimenters” (Radin 1997: 144). He’s probably right **except** for the bit about it being unlikely that **the experimental results are due to chance**.

And note how, at that same skeptdic.com page, all of the papers quoted to refute Radin’s 1987 meta-analysis claims were published *prior* to Dean’s own (1997) book.

Where, then, did Wilber get the confidently presented but brutally untenable idea that Radin’s work was actually valid, much less inarguably so? Why, from **text** in Radin’s own book, of course, as **quoted** on the enlightenment.com website:

“Informed opinion even among skeptics, shows that virtually all the past skeptical arguments against psi have dissolved in the face of overwhelming positive evidence,” and “informed skeptics today agree that chance is no longer a viable explanation for the result obtained in psi experiments.”

Note how the already indefensible “informed skeptics today agree” from Radin becomes the even worse “every statistician agrees” when processed through kw’s view of reality. (Presumably Radin was referring there to ostensible “skeptics” like the people at www.skepticalinvestigations.org ... including himself.)

Here is how one cogent reader of James Randi’s (2002) column suggested competently testing the Q-Link pendant which Wilber is likewise convinced has real effects:

First, a volunteer not communicating with the tester takes ten Q-Link devices and ten dummy devices, which are identical, but have been disabled. The volunteer makes a list of numbers from 1 to 20 and randomly numbers the devices, keeping track of which is which. Now, someone else chooses any 10 of these 20 units and takes them to our friend Her-

bert. His job is to separate the good ones from the phonies. If what he claims is true, he should be able to use a subject (or ten separate ones) and determine, without fail, which are which. With ten units, he has a one-in-1024 probability of getting them all right by chance. And I’ll bet a case of premium tofu that he can’t do it!

On the other hand, Wilber’s (2001d) standards of “proof” for the Q-Link go this way:

[T]he amount of scientific evidence on [the Q-Link] so far is small, but very, very promising. You’ve seen some of it on TV, and stuff.

Just how comfortably is Wilber ensconced with the makers of these new “technologies”? As he himself notes in his (2003) “Excerpt G”:

Any good model open up lines of further research, and the integral or AQAL model is no exception. I have been developing many of these research agendas in conjunction with Bob Richards, co-founder of **Clarus**, Inc. [maker of the Q-Link] and a **vice president of Integral Institute**. We would be glad to discuss these issues with interested parties.

Richards is also on the Advisory Board for the Chopra Foundation, headed by Deepak Chopra.

CHAPTER VI

WILBERIAN MATHEMATICS

WE ALL LEARNED AND APPLIED the Pythagorean theorem in high school, in a form very closely resembling the following:

The sum of the squares of the lengths of the sides of a right-angle triangle is equal to the square of the length of the hypotenuse.

Wilber's own (1996) infamous version of the same principle, however, instead reads like this:

[T]he sum of the squares of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the hypotenuse.

It is clear what Wilber is *trying* to say there, but only because we all learned the theorem itself in high school—his actual statement is meaningless nonsense. (Succeeding editions of the book have, of course, corrected that text at the start of its Chapter 13.)

Interestingly, the *real* Einstein worked out his own, innovative proof of exactly the Pythagorean theorem ... *at age twelve*. Of course, Albert also managed to be viewed, nearly universally and

in spite of his poorer private behaviors, as a “Jewish saint,” rather than an “arrogant asshole” (Wilber on himself, in [Horgan, 2003a]). He further did that without resorting to unconvincing false modesty, and even while doing unparalleled work as a *real* genius. There is a lesson in there somewhere. It is, indeed, a lesson in remaining humble and subject to correction, not simply by one’s awed and overly respectful peers, but rather *in the face of truth*.

Significantly, then, Albert’s most frequent answer to questions put to him in public, on wide-ranging issues which he was, by his own admission, not sufficiently informed to be certain of his opinions, never entailed an attempt to oracularly bluff his way through in order to maintain his status as an “Einstein.” Rather, his most frequent response was simply, and admirably, “I don’t know.”

By contrast, to sustain the feeling that one is a contemporary genius even amid wholly embarrassingly missteps and misrepresentations of *high-school-level ideas* cannot be easy, from any psychological perspective.

Despite the “Pythagorean Fiasco,” Wilber is currently in the process of developing his own (root) branch of mathematics—an “integral calculus of indigenous perspectives”:

As far as I can tell, this primordial mathematics appears to be the root mathematics from which all others are abstracted abstractions [*sic*] (Wilber, 2003b).

Well, perhaps. More likely not, in my opinion, but *perhaps*.

In any case, one cannot help but wish the man well in his “new branch of mathematics” endeavor—in which he is currently all of “3% done.”

And perhaps, given his history, light a candle.

CHAPTER VII

INTEGRAL POLITICS

AT A RECENT WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, Bill Clinton (2006) referred complimentarily to Wilber's (2001b) *A Theory of Everything*, saying:

“[T]he problem is the world needs to be more integrated but it requires a consciousness that's way up here, and an ability to see beyond the differences among us....”

KW himself, interestingly, had earlier given his own defense of the Clintons' interest in transpersonal ideas, in his (2000a) *One Taste*:

The cautionary tale. Michael [Lerner] is friends with Bill and Hillary, and his “politics of meaning” was particularly espoused by Hillary. The liberal media found out about it [in 1996] and had a field day. Saint Hillary, Michael was “Hillary's guru,” and so on.... A simple visualization technique [taught by Jean Houston], used by thousands of therapists daily, was turned into Hillary's “channeling” Eleanor Roosevelt, whereas all she was doing was creative visualization. But anything *interior* is so utterly, radically, hideously alien

to the liberal media that they could hardly discuss the topic without snickering or choking.

Yet, in 1983, Curtis D. MacDougall, emeritus professor of journalism at Northwestern University, had written an entire book detailing the attitude evinced by the very same “liberal media” toward gurus, clairvoyance, ESP, and various less “interior” spiritual pursuits (e.g., astrology, ghosts, witchcraft and UFOs). From that back-cover copy:

In *Superstition and the Press*, America’s most distinguished journalism professor and veteran newspaperman provides a devastating critique of the treatment by the press of claims of supernatural phenomena. This book documents virtually every story about paranormal events to appear in American newspapers for more than a generation. The author’s conclusion is that newspapers, with rare exceptions, treat claims of supernatural experiences and paranormal phenomena without questioning their validity.

Further, Al Franken observed, in his (2003) *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*:

The right-wing media tells us constantly that the problem with the mainstream media is that it has a liberal bias. I don’t think it does. [Sullivan (2005), however, quotes research done at UCLA which proves that there is indeed such a predictable left-wing bias.] But there are other, far more important, biases in the mainstream media than liberal or conservative ones. Most of these biases stem from something called “the profit motive.”

James Randi (2003) has likewise noted:

Educated mainly in the humanities, thus lacking hard scientific training or savvy, and with the constant goal of finding the “perfect story” always applied to their backs, [the media] snatches at any and all scraps of propaganda that filter down to them from the heights above [i.e., from purported “real psychics”], gratefully embellishing and flavoring them before presenting them to the consumers below, in return for appropriate tribute, of course....

I’ve mentioned before the fact that the dozens of tests of power-of-prayer that are carried out every year, often at

great cost, only produce a fraction of positive results, well within the expected range of error—but those are the results—the only results—that media editors choose to feature.

And from Jacqueline Deval, in her (2008) marketing guide, *Publicize Your Book!*:

The reporter's job ... is to get a good story for their readers. They are looking for angles in everything you say and do.

Read even just a little bit into the skeptical perspective and you will find that, to the present day, skeptics are at least as disgusted with the overly credulous nature of media coverage of claimed paranormal phenomena as Wilber is with the same media for not being credulous enough!

The reality is that any informed and unbiased presentation of the various transpersonal claims eagerly accepted by kw would be “bad press.” And the more informed and fair the presentation was, the worse it would be for him and his ilk.

Venturing further into “integral politics,” Wilber (2003d) has predictably given his opinion on the war in Iraq:

I personally believe that any protest movement that does not *equally* protest *both* America's invasion *and* Saddam's murder of 400,000 people is a protest movement that does not truly represent peace or non-aggression or worldcentric values.

I am aware of no major protest movement that has protested both forms of violence equally, and that has insisted upon an immediate end to both aggressions, **and offered a believable way that both aggressions could actually be halted immediately** so that neither side can continue its homicidal actions.

That is, I am aware of no integral protest movement anywhere in the world, unfortunately.

Amnesty International is a “major protest movement.” While not officially condemning the war in Iraq, to any right-of-center political perspective they have done much more to “harm” the American cause there than to aid it:

Critics of AI have suggested that AI's concern for the human rights implications of this war disproportionately criticize

the effects of U.S. military action while in comparison they were less vociferous about the abuses of the Hussein regime and the human rights implications of the continued rule of this government ([Wikipedia, 2006](#)).

And yet—

Supporters of AI have pointed out that AI was critical of Hussein’s regime while Donald Rumsfeld was shaking the Iraqi leader by the hand, and that when the White House later released reports on the human rights record of Hussein, they depended almost entirely on AI documents that the U.S. had ignored when Iraq was a U.S. ally in the 1980s.

Indeed, “the September/October 1988 [Amnesty International] newsletter’s lead article was an appeal to the United Nations Security Council to ‘act immediately to stop the massacre of Kurdish civilians by Iraqi forces’ under Saddam Hussein.”

Wilber might try to hide behind the idea that AI hasn’t protested those two sets of evils *exactly* equally—which, by definition, it couldn’t have, regardless of which side it might (or might not) have favored. (Plus, in not officially taking a stand against the Iraq war, AI has obviously explicitly protested it far *less* than they have objected to the tortures and mass murders under Saddam’s rule. So, evidently, in order to show themselves to be properly integral, they should be protesting it *more*, odd as that may sound given their mission and history.) Amnesty also probably never had a plan to offer in which “both aggressions [i.e., the invasion of Iraq, vs. Saddam’s mass murders] could actually be halted immediately.” Did *you*? Did *kw*? Not likely.

By Wilber’s own absurd third criterion of needing to have presented such a plan in order to qualify as “integral” in his judgment, he fails as miserably as anyone: Not only is there no movement which meets that third standard—a quite unnecessary one, in terms of evaluating one’s good intentions or state/stage of consciousness—there is probably not even a single *individual* who does. (If there was a workable and obviously correct political solution to that problem, which kept everyone honest in the process, Bush would never have gotten away with that rushed invasion in the first place.)

So why does kw even bother framing all that? Why does he set it up so that, in practical terms, no movement could possibly be

“integral” with regard to the Iraq conflict ... even while he himself and his institute are “integral” by definition?

My strong suspicion? He is doing it to reserve high integrality only for meditative beings such as himself, regardless of how superior the behavior of others may be in practice when compared to his own ideas and character.

If you disagree, consider kw’s self-aggrandizing (2000a) statement, in *One Taste*, that “until the ecologists understand that the ozone hole, pollution, and toxic wastes are all completely part of the Original Self, they will never gain enlightened awareness, **which alone knows how to proceed** with these pressing problems.” There, too, he is basically integral by definition, even though being less than ecologically conscious in practice (i.e., for his leather couches and Thanksgiving turkey dinners, whatever one may otherwise think of such things).

That Wilber would have ever put the above “ozone” ruminations into print, without considering how blatantly self-celebrating and openly grandiose they are, smacks of something far worse than a mere occasional “mental lapse.” And again: Where is *his* workable, integral solution to the ecological crisis? Nowhere, even for ostensibly having an “enlightened, integral awareness” in his own consciousness.

Given all that, it is no surprise that any other movement, such as Amnesty, composed merely of “ordinary mortals,” must be “non-integral” ... until its members (who obviously overlap significantly with the ecological movement) attain to the same exalted state of consciousness as kw thinks he possesses.

Consider also the perspective of Greenpeace (2003)—*the* typical “green meme” organization, explicitly cited as such by kw (2000f) himself—in outlining their reasons for officially protesting the war in Iraq from the beginning:

We don’t support Saddam Hussein. We don’t back any governments or political leaders. When we decided to take a stand against this war, it was because we see a far greater danger in the concept of preventive war....

For one nation to take arms against another because it *believes* that nation to be a threat undermines the foundations of peaceful coexistence, multilateral institutions like the United Nations, and an “entire web of laws, treaties, organizations, and shared values,” to quote John Brady Kiesling’s letter of resignation from the U.S. diplomatic core.

As tempting as it may be to those who view Saddam as a cipher of evil to step in and remove him militarily, one has to ask what’s next?

After the U.S. conducts a preventive war on Iraq, will it set its sights on Iran? North Korea? And if the U.S. can wage a preventive war to protect its national security, shouldn’t India or Pakistan have the same right?

This is the first step on a slippery slope. It ends with the United Nations in tatters and the rule of might making right.

If you are wondering how significantly the membership and culture of Greenpeace overlaps with that of Amnesty, consider Rolf Schwendter’s (1991) explicit mention of those two groups in exactly that context:

Examples for the clusters and networks of pivot institutions [as gathering-points for members of overlapping cultures] ... would be groups like Amnesty International, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund—a large number of political, cultural, human rights-centered, ecological, self-help-oriented organizations.

The reactions exhibited by “patriotic” Westerners post-9/11 and immediately prior to the war in Iraq included the need for protection by a religious or political “savior,” the witch-hunting eradication of “evil,” and the willing surrender of one’s freedoms in that hunt. We further saw the voiced belief by American newsmen that “we’re winners,” being attacked by “losers” only because of that ostensible superiority; and the regarding of anyone who dared to question the claims of the country’s alternately lying and priority-shifting leaders as being “unpatriotic.” We also had death threats against the likes of the courageous Dixie Chicks and the leaders of Greenpeace, by persons who obviously identify so strongly with their nationwide “cult” as being “the best in the world” that even the suggestion that one could be embarrassed by the bullying behaviors of its leader(s), or that the evil “out there” might not be the immediate threat which it is presented as being, causes them to wish you dead.

It is therefore worth considering the fairly obvious point that both religion and politics utilize the same techniques of manipulation on their followers, bringing out *exactly* the same psychological

defenses in their adherents. Does it really make a difference whether the Evil Other is Satan, or communism/terrorism? (If you studied Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* back in high school, with its intended parallels between the Salem witch-hunts and McCarthyism, you already know that it makes no difference.) Could the psychological reactions/defenses really be any different against one than against the other? Isn't it *obvious* that, given a structurally comparable set of threats and fears in the political world as in the religious, the psychological reactions to those real or perceived dangers will likewise be hardly distinguishable?

Whether or not the dangers actually exist as presented by the leader/guru is secondary. To bring out the cult-follower defenses, it is enough that one *believes* they exist and that only the right guru/president/ideology can keep one's body and/or soul safe from them.

As the social psychologist Philip Zimbardo (2004b) then put it, after elucidating ten "ingredients"—from rationales for engaging, to small first steps, to high exit costs—for "getting ordinary people to do things they originally believe they would not" do:

Such procedures are utilized across varied influence situations where those in authority want others to do their bidding, but know that few would engage in the "end game" final solution without first being properly prepared psychologically to do the "unthinkable." I would encourage readers to do the thought exercise of applying these compliance principles to the tactics used by the Bush administration to get Americans to endorse going to war against Iraq.

Robert J. Lifton (2003) likewise noted the inclination of America's leaders "to instill fear in their people as a means of enlisting them for illusory military efforts at world hegemony." One need not agree with the latter half of that reading to recognize the penchant of a nation's people to periodically and obediently rally 'round the flag, even when it was obvious that they were being deliberately manipulated.

Yet, there are always persons who are subjected to exactly the same attempts at coercion and subtly enforced obedience, and yet who have enough ability to think for themselves that they are able to see through the attempted manipulations, and refuse to go along with the lies of the political, spiritual and "integral" leaders, even

if doing so gets them branded as unevolved (or unpatriotic), and thus not worthy of membership in the "saved" group.

CHAPTER VIII

INTEGRAL CENSORSHIP

DR. CHRISTIAN DE QUINCEY (www.deepspirit.com) is a professor of philosophy at John F. Kennedy University in California. He is also the managing editor of the *IONS Review*, published by the Institute of Noetic Sciences. (IONS was in turn founded by astronaut Edgar Mitchell.) In late 2000, he published a critique of Wilber's integral philosophy and emotional character in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (JCS).

Wilber (2001c) responded with over forty single-spaced pages of attempted demonstrations as to how de Quincey had misrepresented his work and his character.

De Quincey (2001) volleyed with a twenty-eight page “refutation of the refutation.”

One of Wilber's students, Sean Hargens (2001)—also a member of the Integral Institute—then replied with fifty-plus pages of text to “refute the refutation of the refutation.” In it, he simultaneously and reasonably asserted de Quincey's tendencies toward passive-aggressive behavior (in his writings), and reliance on pop psychology in his character analysis of Wilber's “nasty tone.”

And there the matter has rested.

Until now.

It is not my purpose here to attempt to evaluate those authors’ respective criticisms of one another. Rather, I would simply like to note several allegations which de Quincey has made regarding the behind-the-scenes aspects of the relevant processes. Those may then give one pause when considering the overall health of the consciousness-studies field. In particular, they may cast some additional doubt on the aspects of that field which closely surround Wilber and his followers, shaping as that proximity does the allowed discussions around them.

In commenting on how Wilber may have obtained pre-publication knowledge of the detailed contents of his original submitted paper, de Quincey (2001) has suggested:

[Wilber’s] friend Keith Thompson, evidently, had passed along a series of *private and confidential* email exchanges between Thompson and me. I had included Thompson in the group of prepublication reviewers, and had lengthy online conversations with him—particularly about I-I [i.e., intersubjectivity]. However, I explicitly prefaced our exchanges with a request that the contents of our conversations be kept confidential, and should not be shared. Thompson agreed, and said he would honor my request.

Not only did he “approach” Wilber and “warn” him of “severe distortions,” Thompson used the content of my emails to write a critique of my Wilber critique, which he sent off to JCS, suggesting that either his paper be published as a Wilber review instead of mine, or perhaps alongside mine. Not surprisingly, the JCS editor saw right through the ruse. Thompson took this underhand action without informing me, clearly breaching a confidential agreement between us. Very unprofessional. A clear case of “Wilber police” mentality. (Thompson, and his friend and Wilber acolyte Sean Hargens, later tried a similar tactic to suppress publication of another article on Wilber I’d written for *IONS Review*!)

Any devoted disciple would, of course, have behaved in the same way, in defending his guru-figure’s “honor.” That is, dissenting opinions are never allowed, and an (alleged) broken promise is a small price to pay for preserving the sage’s public image.

Given all of the above, one further cannot help but wonder: Did Wilber himself know about those alleged attempts at suppression?

Recall: According to de Quincey, their mutual friend Keith Thompson was in contact with both of them after allegedly breaking his promise of confidentiality to de Quincey. He was also the same individual who reportedly suggested to JCS that they publish his analysis of Wilber's work, rather than de Quincey's review. Would Thompson have gone forward with that, without bouncing the idea off Wilber first?

If Wilber did know about Thompson's alleged plans, his acceptance of that way of doing things, even if that acceptance meant simply doing nothing to stop Thompson, would be absolutely chilling. The *real* Einstein, for one, would never have stooped to such poor behavior.

Ironically, Wilber (2000a) had earlier voiced his own attitude toward the need for a free exchange of ideas within the consciousness-studies marketplace and elsewhere. That was given in terms of the importance of passionately communicating your vision, Kierkegaard-like, regardless of whether you are right or wrong, that it might be heard and adjudicated by a reluctant world.

One wonders, though: Would Wilber and Keith Thompson allow de Quincey equally valid passion in speaking his own vision, without (Thompson allegedly) covertly attempting to stop the publication of the latter's disagreeable ideas?

Regardless, contrary to Wilber's impassioned but misled plea, being right *does* matter. For, being wrong only makes it more difficult for correct ideas to be heard above the prevailing cacophony. Everyone who has ever done fundamental, thrillingly original work in any field—e.g., Einstein, Bohm, Benoit Mandelbrot (via fractals), etc.—has discovered that the hard way. For, the established misunderstandings place literally decades of resistance into the path of the acceptance of right ideas. That Wilber has encountered far less “wailing and gnashing” of scholarly teeth speaks much more to the synthetic and frequently derivative nature of his own (esp. early) ideas than to anything else.

In my own case, regarding the “Wilber police,” from the beginning of my published debunking of kw's false claims and consistently inadequate research, the most loyal members of his community have predictably reacted very negatively to being informed of the truth about his work.

Foremost among those “integral experts” and censors has been a follower employed as an “education analyst” in Wheaton, Illinois, going by the online name of Goethean. His (2005) response to my **exposing** of kw’s indefensible support of the long-discredited claims of Intelligent Design boiled down to this:

Geoffery [*sic*] Falk is an asshole who is not to be trusted on these matters whatsoever. His book, *Stripping the Gurus* proves on every page that he is out to gain fame for himself at the expense of those who are his superiors in every way. (He has samples online to prove it!) His words are pretty much irrelevant to any honest inquiry on any subject.

Since that same individual functions proudly as a self-appointed guardian of the Ken Wilber **Wikipedia** page, no one should be surprised to find that, for many months, he (and others) succeeded in blocking any mention of my debunking of Wilber from that public space, even when the relevant links to my work had been placed there by interested third parties with whom I have had no contact.

Immediately after my first attempt at getting those critiques listed on that Wikipedia page, Goethean went through all of my other attempted **contributions** to the debunking of other spiritual leaders on Wikipedia, removing any of them that hadn’t already been deleted by other censors equal to himself. (Some of those pages already had links to Rick Ross’s immensely valuable but grossly copyright-violating website [www.rickross.com], collecting the non-book-length exposés of numerous gurus and so-called cult leaders into a single database.) He had only an IP address to go on there, however, and so could not reasonably remove those links for being “self-promotional,” given that the links were thus posted anonymously. Yet, that is exactly the reason which he gave for deleting many of them.

Goethean (2006) has since given the following extremely dubious justification for his censorial actions:

I agree with User:Nofalk’s assessment of the Geoffery [*sic*] Falk piece. I find it inappropriate for this page. It’s an essay by someone with a deeply studied ignorance of Wilber’s writings. It’s inaccurate to call it a critique. To dismiss something out of hand without understanding it is not a critique. It’s an unsympathetic [*sic*] dismissal. I had the link under that topic heading before the edit war started. There are

